PlayStation®

The Official Magazine

Issue 045 May 2011

PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 45 (May 2011)

RESIDENT EVIL

Operation Raccoon City

Even the zombies are scared...

PREY 2
Stunning shooter revealed

BATTLEFIELD 3
The new modern warfare

MOTORSTORM APOCALYPSE
Reviewed! Best one yet?

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY
Time to clean up Gotham!

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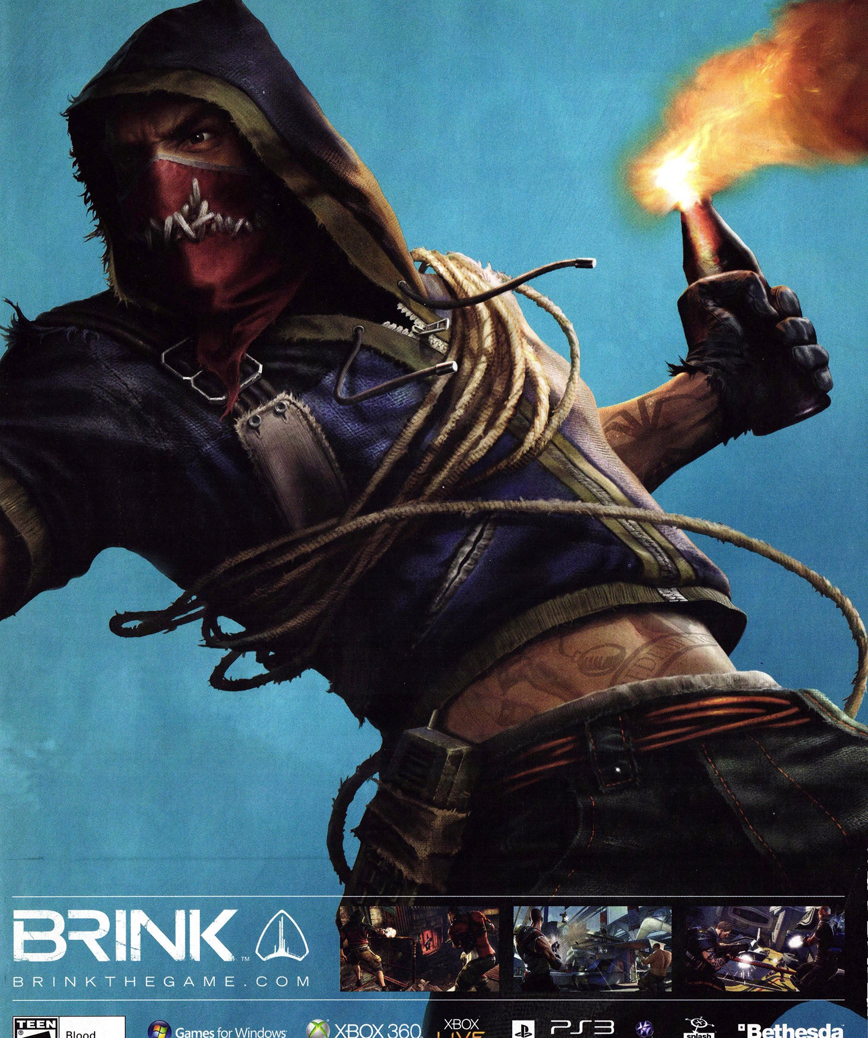
DEAD ISLAND **UNCHARTED 3** BEST PSP RPGS **CRYSIS 2**

REVOLUTION BEGINS
MAY 17 2011



TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Language
Violence

Games for Windows XBOX 360 XBOX LIVE PS3 PlayStation 3 PlayStation Network splash damage Bethesda

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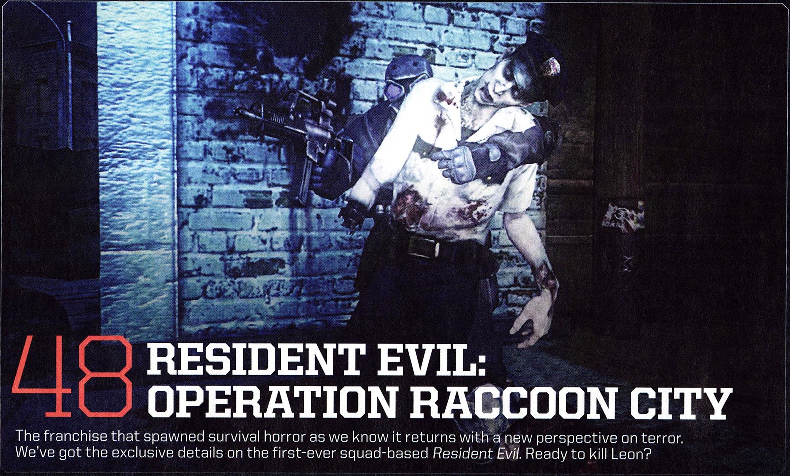
MAY 2011

COVER FEATURE



48 RESIDENT EVIL: OPERATION RACCOON CITY

The franchise that spawned survival horror as we know it returns with a new perspective on terror. We've got the exclusive details on the first-ever squad-based *Resident Evil*. Ready to kill Leon?

ON THE COVER

PS3 | PSP | PlayStation.2

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WORLD EXCLUSIVE
RESIDENT EVIL
Operation Raccoon City
Even the zombies are scared...

PREY 2

BATTLEFIELD 3

MOTORSTORM APOCALYPSE

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

DEAD ISLAND UNCHARTED 3 BEST PSP RPGS CRYSIS 2

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Move over, Boba Fett. Space has a brand-new bounty hunter, and he's armed to the teeth.

Oh, why thank you, my pet.

62 PSP'S BEST RPGS

Thanks to the PSP, Japanese RPGs are no longer an endangered species.

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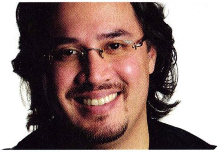
74 **MOTORSTORM: APOCALYPSE**
It turns out the car pulling up fast on the outside is the least of our worries; we've got to deal with collapsing bridges, burning buildings, and exploding engines first. Bring it on!

82 **THE 3RD BIRTHDAY**
A successful shooter on the PSP? With skimpy outfits and mind control? Sold!

Future Proof

The PS3 is the gift that keeps on giving



We'd just finished dinner when my industry friend posed his question to me:

"Name for me any other piece of technology that improves with age?"

Granted, this friend works for Sony, in PR—but his question was valid and got me thinking. Truth told, he's right; almost all tech diminishes in value as it gets older. But not so with PlayStation 3—which made his follow-up query even more intriguing. "Why isn't anyone writing about that?" he asked.

It's something I've loved about PlayStation since the launch of the very first system, but I hadn't really thought about in such straightforward terms. While competing consoles tend to top off in graphical quality, for example, midway through their lifecycle, PlayStations continue to deliver more performance the later they get into their lifecycle. Just compare PS3 games now with those from launch, and it's easy to see how they're not only surpassing the competition, but also delivering new visual experiences. And that Blu-ray gamble early on? It's paid off—not just for movie-watching, but storage capacity for games. We also shouldn't forget true 1080p output, along with the very best 3D gaming. That's all here, only on PS3.

Meanwhile, the PlayStation Network continues to grow, offering the widest range of content options with free access. And Home? Even that's on track to finally come into its own. I can't talk about what's going on with Home quite yet, but stay tuned: It's on its way to becoming a true destination for gamers.

GARY

Gary Steinman
Editor in Chief
twitter.com/TinyManRages

Gary Steinman
Editor in Chief

Goofy nicknames? Editor Gary "Lord Garth" Steinman was once called Gory Stinkman by a man now affectionately known as that speedbump out on Route 4.

Greg Orlando
Executive Editor

An astute political mind, Greg Orlando has steadfastly refused to vote Atomic Satan into the White House. His secret spy name is: Miss Wilkerson.

Ken Bousquet
Art Director

As the overlord of art and all that is right and good with the world, Ken Bousquet has earned the right to be called whatever he wants. Which is Ken Bousquet.

Roger Burchill
Managing Editor

As a purveyor of old-timey wisdom, Roger Burchill says an unwashed sock is a bad old friend. Just go with it and call him the King of Velcro.

Scott Butterworth
Associate Editor

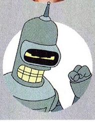
"Safety" Scott Butterworth extolls the virtue of, uh, safetyosity. He warns us all that calling him late for dinner would be...decidedly unsafe.

Anne Lewis
Editorial Intern

Young intern Anne Lewis is equal parts pluck and can-do. If only she was more talented at juggling chainsaws. Her cool nickname is: Yodelin' Pete.

Christin Chi
Designer

This is true: Christin Chi does not have time to bleed, but always finds mad rhymes for mad times. Her supersecret PTOM name is: Lord Punchington IV.



LetterTron 9250
Qs and Some As

Fed a steady diet of cease-and-desist orders, LetterTron regrets not pursuing a career in the lucrative field of crushing humans. Call it: Your DOOM!

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8652 GAMES WITH CHEATS/ GUIDES/FAQS & WALKTHROUGHS

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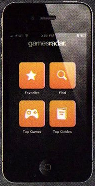
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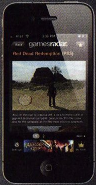
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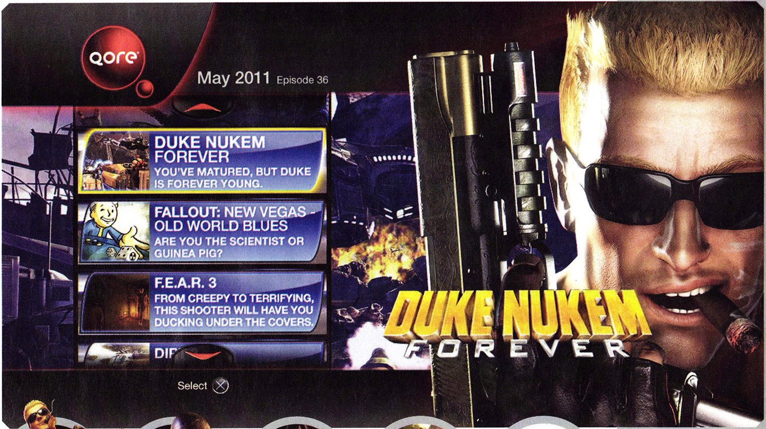
Inside Qore Episode 36

Hail to the King, Baby

After 14 years of development, *Duke Nukem Forever* finally arrives to ogle babes and blast aliens. We got hands-on with The Duke to reveal why it's just as guilty-pleasure-fun as the original. For a different take on Sin City, we explore the megatons of content packed into the *Fallout: New Vegas - Old World Blues* DLC pack. I even got to act in the game! Turning to the creepy, *F.E.A.R. 3* mixes the occult and an FPS into something frightening. And feel a different kind of thrill with *DiRT 3*, the rally-racing benchmark.

VERONICA BELMONT HOST OF QORE

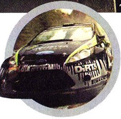
Available 5/3/2011 on the PlayStation® Network


qore
May 2011 Episode 36
DUKE NUKEM FOREVER
YOU'VE MATURED, BUT DUKE IS FOREVER YOUNG.
FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS - OLD WORLD BLUES
ARE YOU THE SCIENTIST OR GUINEA PIG?
F.E.A.R. 3
FROM CREEPY TO TERRIFYING, THIS SHOOTER WILL HAVE YOU DUCKING UNDER THE COVERS.
DIR
Select ⊗
DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

Duke Nukem Forever
You've matured since your adolescence, but *Duke* is forever young. Come get some.

Fallout: New Vegas - Old World Blues
Sometimes you're the scientist, and sometimes you're the guinea pig.

F.E.A.R. 3
As if getting shot at isn't scary enough, sprinkle in the demons and creepy children.



DiRT 3
Gymkhana? This obstacle-course mode is nothing to sneeze at, augmenting the rally-driving standard.

THE GREEN HORNET
THE DILEMMA
"HILARIO

Upcoming Blu-ray and Games releases
Audrey sets her sights on the hottest Blu-rays this month!

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The PlayStation Entertainment Plan

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SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY

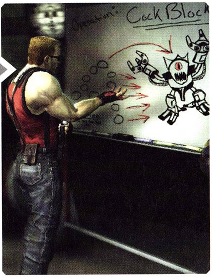
MAY 01

Free Comic Book Day
Remember the guy dressed as Spider-Man who stabbed another guy last free comic book day? That totally wasn't us.

FREE COMIC BOOK DAY

03

In stores: *Thor: God of Thunder, Duke Nukem Forever*



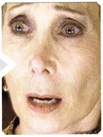
SONY
WALKMAN

07

Over the Hill
Sony Corporation turns 65 today, and we are staving off senility by keeping it active and feeding it lots of money.

08

Mother's Day
Mothers may hate games (especially *Dead Space 2*), but today is the day to set differences aside and make them some pancakes.



10

In stores: *Virtua Tennis 4, MX vs. ATV: Alive*

13

Friday the 13th
We aren't superstitious people, so today we're going to break a mirror in front of a black cat while walking under a ladder in a theater and saying *Macbeth*.

14

Leave Star Wars Alone
For George Lucas' birthday we are going to present him with a 30-minute video of wookies talking with no subtitles.

15

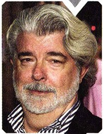
Happy Birthday tgc
Thatgamecompany, maker of *fl0w*, *Flower*, and the soon-to-be-released *Journey*, was founded five years ago.

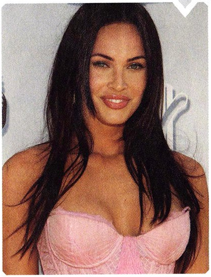
16

Megan Fox's Birthday
We like to think that under her dirty, erotic exterior, Megan Fox is just a girl that needs saving; preferably by us.

17

In stores: *L.A. Noire, Brink, Deep Black, LEGO Pirates of the Carribean*

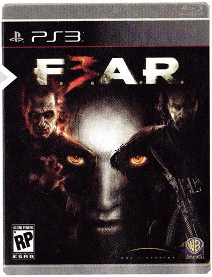




24

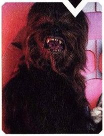
F.E.A.R. 3
Alma is back and angrier than ever.

Also in stores: *Dirt 3, Operation Flashpoint: Red River, Top Gun* game/movie BD, *Days of Thunder* game/movie BD



27

Isn't She Lovely
The Golden Gate Bridge was opened to the public for the first time in 1937. It now stands as one of San Francisco's main attractions. Our office is another.



31

In stores: *Dungeon Siege III, Red Faction: Armageddon*

* Release dates are subject to change by the publishers.

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- Music Production
- Sports Marketing & Media
- Web Design & Development

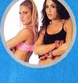
The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

Fireballer
Curt Schilling pitches Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning
▸▸Page 14

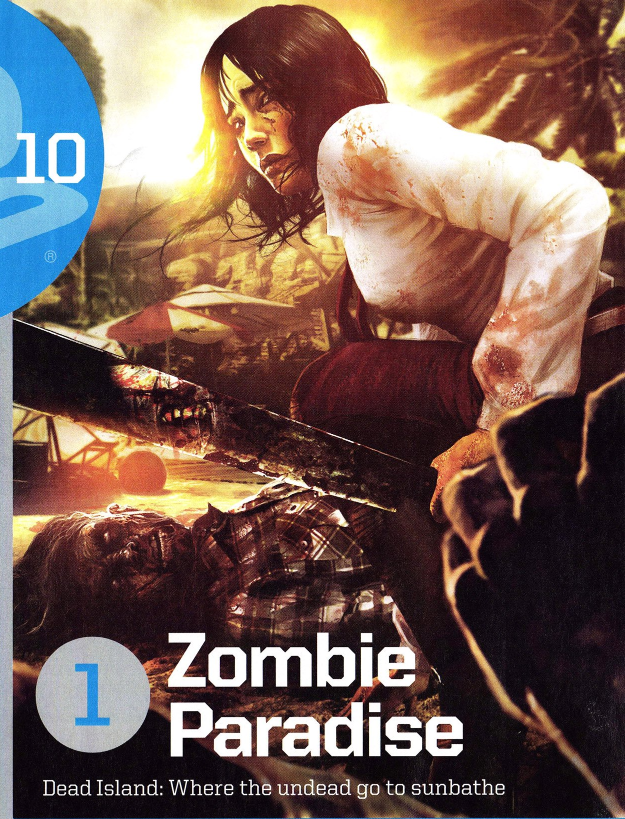
Toy Story
Gaze in wonder at the hottest game-related action figures
▸▸Page 18

Girl Fight!
Supremacy MMA's Felice Herrig can kick asses and break hearts.
▸▸Page 22



Village People
Looking for a little R&R with your RTS? Head to Akimi Village.
▸▸Page 24

The Great Debate
Is it good to be bad? PTOM editors mull morality.
▸▸Page 26



1 Zombie Paradise

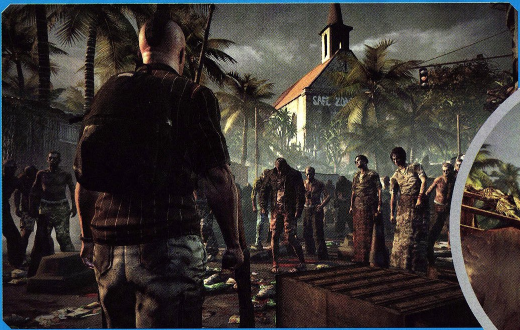
Dead Island: Where the undead go to sunbathe

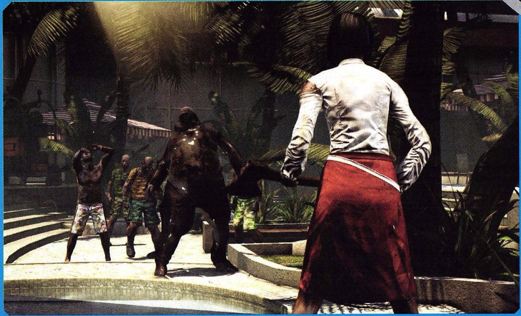
The trailer for the first-person adventure *Dead Island* grabbed us and shook. For those under a rock, it told the story, in reverse, of a family on a pleasant island vacation. The family had a few laughs, got eaten by a few zombies, and died horribly.

Dead Island, for the record, is a misnomer. It's actually quite alive, albeit with ghouls. And its story takes place after the unnamed family in the trailer gets eaten.

We take the role of a survivor of what Vincent Kummer, brand manager for the game's publisher Deep Silver, calls the zombie apocalypse. We can play as one of four characters, each representative of a different character class. We're shown a demo starring Sam B., a one-hit wonder rap star in the mold of the delightful kids in Kriss Kross. Sam is the tank character; we'll also be able to play as an assassin; a leader-type, and a jack-of-all-trades.

Kummer calls the game a zombie slasher action role-playing game to better distinguish the game from, say, *Dead Space* or *Resident Evil*. "It's not going to be a dark floor, creeping around for minutes, always anxious, waiting for someone to attack. It's going to be in-your-face action most





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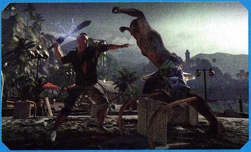


of the time. You're going to slash through hordes of zombies, cutting off an arm, cutting off a leg, and while you're doing that, you're going to level up and skill up." With Sam B., we can, say, improve his recuperation skills, augment his fury, or unlock a powerful skull-crushing attack.

Given the game features zombies, the developers at Techland want *Island* to be as realistic as possible. This means players will have to scrounge for weapons and if they find a gun, it will be because a dead policeman or criminal left it. Ammunition for guns will be scarce, too, so the reliance here is strictly on melee and improvised weaponry. A crafting system a la *Dead Rising 2* lets players use blueprints to create new, more powerful weapons. Workbenches allow us to repair, upgrade, and customize weaponry.

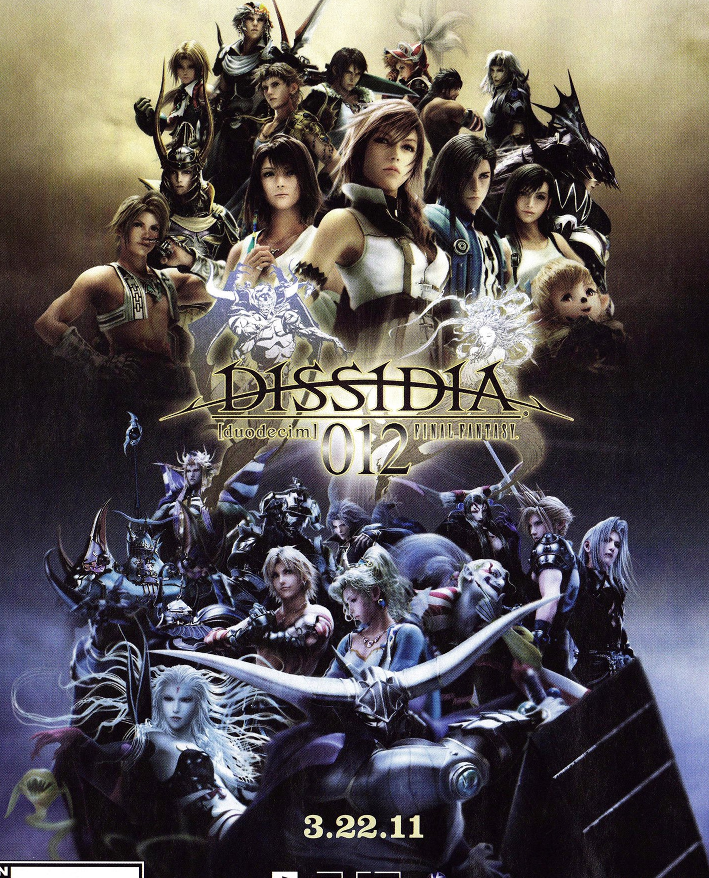
The game opens in a hut on the stricken island of Banoi. Survivors have gathered, and we learn an intriguing fact: We're immune to the zombie plague, which makes exploring Banoi's open world a lot more appealing. Although the story centers on our character, the game supports an online, drop-in/drop-out cooperative mode for three friends.

What follows, as Thomas Hobbes said, is nasty, brutish, and short. We're introduced to slow-moving zombies; nimble, fast zombies; and zombies on fire. Bludgeons can be used to smash in skulls and break arms and legs. Edged weaponry lops off limbs, and we can hurl everything we get our hands on at the oncoming horde.

Along the way, we can tackle side missions, and in-game survivors will have jobs we'll need to do to advance the plot: A man is trapped in a car surrounded by zombies and if we free him, he'll give us access to a workbench. There will be minibosses and exploding zombies and even condoms—their purpose is undetermined, and the developers refuse to explain its significance—to collect. We can also help with car repairs and tool around in an automobile.

Island had been stalled in development, but seems to be back on track. "As my mom says, we had to clean out the closet," game producer Thorsten Flugel muses. Expect trouble in paradise to finally see the light of day later this year.

THE DIVINE CONFLICT BETWEEN HARMONY AND DISCORD RAGES ON



3.22.11

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Fantasy Violence
Mild Language
Partial Nudity
Suggestive Themes

PSP
PlayStation Portable
PlayStation Network

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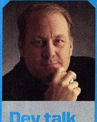
The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

2 Kingdoms of Curt

Former major league hurler tells of his Reckoning



Dev talk

"To me, every good role-playing game truly can make you a hero."
Curt Schilling
CEO,
38 Studios

Curt Schilling is still a fireballer. Schilling, who won 216 games as a major league baseball player for the Boston Red Sox, Arizona Diamondbacks, and Philadelphia Phillies, is sitting on a couch somewhere in San Francisco. He's just been handed an empty plastic water bottle by one of his handlers and, unceremoniously, purses his lips to its lid and...*ptui*... deposits a thin stream of disgustingness into it.

Despite his major league effort, he's there not to gross everyone out, but to introduce his company 38 Studios' new RPG *Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning*. Even if he has to field a few goofball questions to do it.

Do you believe in the creationist theory of baseball, or the evolutionary approach as put forth by paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould?
Totally got me off with that one.

Well, some people say Abner Doubleday created baseball, but Gould said it was more an evolutionary process stemming from games like rounders.
I'll take the Doubleday theory.

Have you ever dedicated one of your 216 wins to former U.S. President William Howard Taft?
Never.

What's more important for you: Making it into the Baseball Hall of Fame or getting a perfect 10 out of 10 for *Kingdoms of Amalur*...

[*Interrupting*] Ten out of 10. [Baseball's] not even a close second.

You've built a dream team of sorts at 38 Studios. Do you ever fear a clash of egos?

No. And I would tell you the dream team is as much in the studio as it is in the visionaries, if not more so. The visionaries, the reason it works so well, is because every one of us understood that none of us knew how to make games. We understand what our skill set is and what we bring to the table—we bring those skills to the table, and then we let everyone do what it is they do. Todd [McFarlane] empowers our artists and animators to get better at what they do. R.A. [Salvatore] has created the story and he's kind of backed away once [the developers] took the reins. And my job is to protect the people and the culture we've created for the company.

What do you think makes *Kingdoms of Amalur* special?

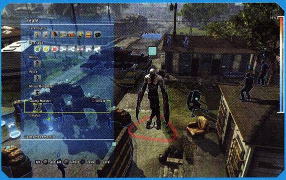
Combat and the open world in the same game, I think that's the big driver. Our combat is unique, it is one of a kind. That's not to say it's better than everybody else. It's different than anything you've ever played, and I think that's a great thing. You marry that to a true open world. A lot of people have talked about open world; I have played games that have said they were open world, and they really weren't. I could go anywhere but there was nothing to do when I went off the yellow brick road. This game, I don't care what path you take: where you turn, you're going to find somebody or something that lives in a place you didn't expect and does things you didn't expect.

What lesson can 38 Studios learn from videogames?

The one thing I've learned in five years I've been in the industry is I can now tell the difference when I play a game made by people who cared about the game and when I play a game made by people who are trying to meet a deadline. I can tell when I play *WOW* [*World of WarCraft*] I know everybody at Blizzard plays *WOW*. When I play something else that's not good, I can tell those people were trying to get their paychecks and meet their quarter profits.

3 Cole Play

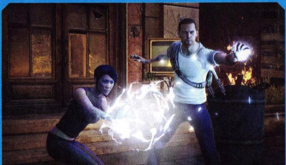
Good, bad, and everything in between—it's all possible now in inFamous 2



Ambitious doesn't quite begin to describe what *inFamous 2* has in store for us when it ships on June 7. An "ambitious" open-world sequel might stop after offering up a bigger city or new abilities, but *inFamous 2* goes several extra miles by not only including a greatly expanded system of gameplay-altering moral choices, but also giving us the ability to craft our own missions, storylines, and play styles.

Using a simple, *LittleBigPlanet*-style interface, *inFamous 2's* creation mode lets us pick any of the game's objects and characters and drop them into the world, setting up behavior routines and objectives as we go. These creations can then be dropped live into everyone else's single-player city, with players able to filter the user-made content however they like.

This comes alongside a hugely expanded, sidekick-driven karma system that affects not only how Cole MacGrath develops, but also how missions are tackled. Listening to "good" sidekick Kuo results in solutions that avoid civilian casualties, like freeing captive cops to fight alongside Cole. Following "bad" sidekick Nix instead means tactics that are destructive, nasty, and reckless—like slamming a stolen train car into the bad guys. Either way sounds like a win to us.



PS3 PlayStation 3 PlayStation Network

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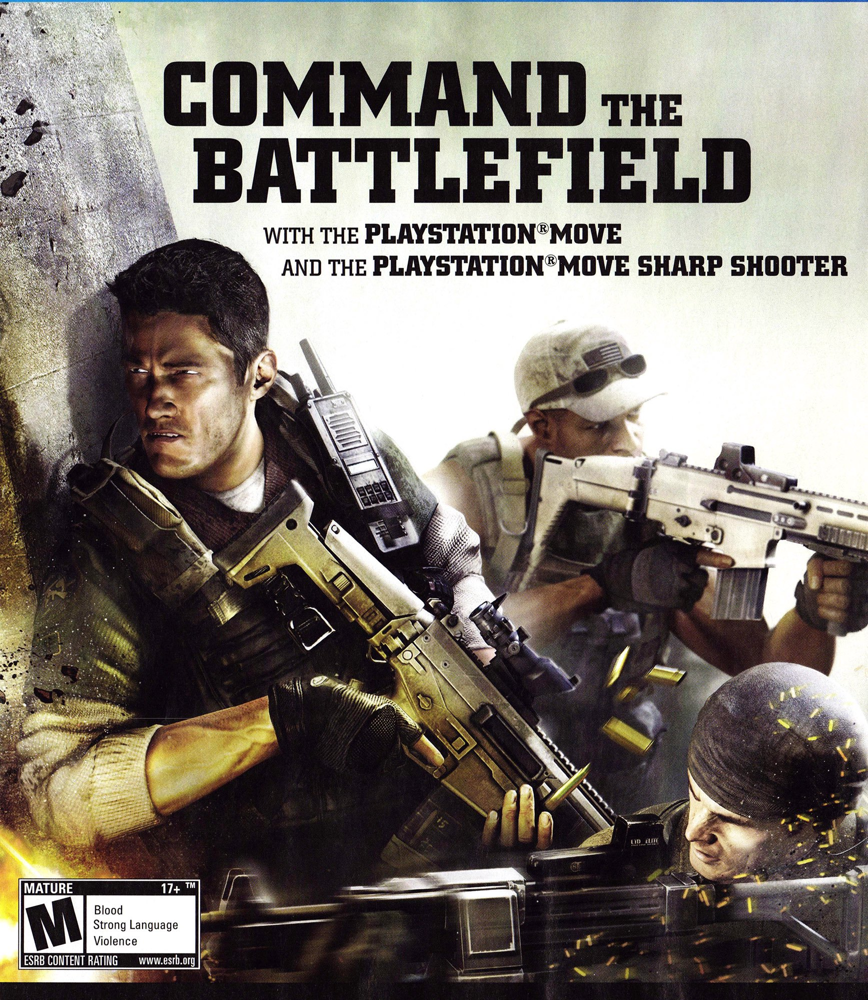

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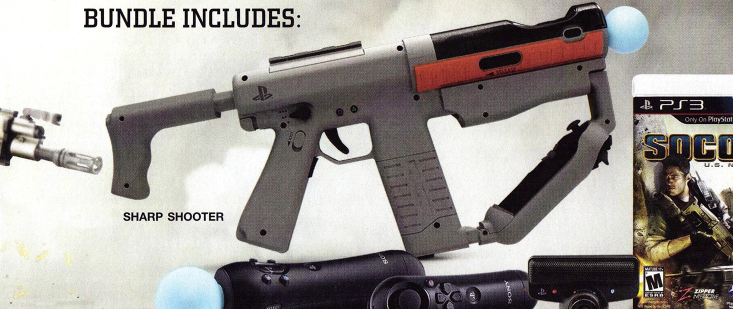

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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

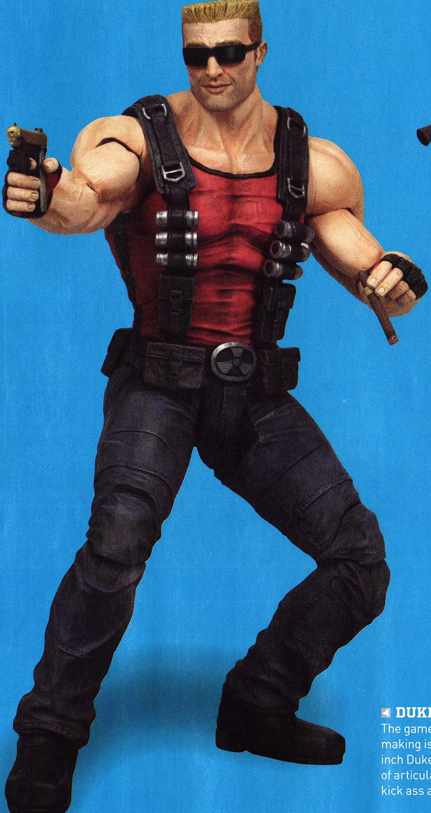
4 Time For a Bigger Toy Box

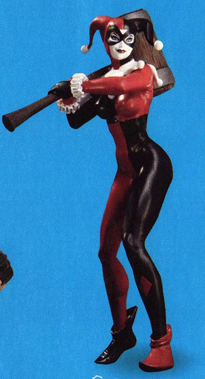
The next wave of game-related action figures is about to arrive

LITTLEBIG-PLANET Series 2 **(Mezco Toyz)**
Mezco delivers a denim Sackboy, Sky (featuring a pigtail wig), and Sackboy (with dragon headdress), along with a nine-inch Sackboy Do-It-Yourself Model Kit waiting to be customized.

METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER **(Square Enix Products)**
Expect new additions to Square Enix's *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker* line this summer/early fall, with Miller and Snake in battle dress.

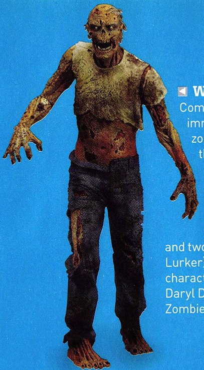
MASS EFFECT 2 **(DC Direct)**
PS3 fans had to wait awhile to play one of BioWare's best games, but there's no wait for the first assortment of *Mass Effect 2* toys hitting this spring, which includes Shepard, Tali, Thane, and Grunt.



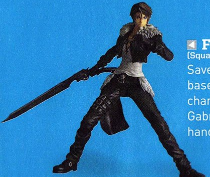


▲ **DC UNIVERSE ONLINE** **(DC Direct)**
The hit MMO has inspired four waves of action figures based on artist Jim Lee's incomparable design work for the game. Wave 3, hitting in May, will include Black Canary and The Flash, and look for Zatanna and Solomon Grundy (born on a Monday) in August. This statue of Harley Quinn (above) will be out in November.

◀ **DUKE NUKEM** **(NECA)**
The game that's been seemingly decades in the making is finally entering the toy arena, as a seven-inch Duke Nukem figure with a whopping 25 points of articulation and signature firearms is ready to kick ass and chew bubblegum on a small scale.



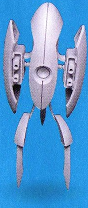
WALKING DEAD (McFarlane Toys)
Comic artist Todd McFarlane is immortalizing the year's best zombie TV show—and one of the all-time best zombie comics—with two lines of action figures. The comic adaptations are up first, with an assortment that includes Rick Grimes, Michonne, and two zombies (a Roamer and a Lurker). Series 2 will focus on the TV characters, with toys for Grimes, Daryl Dixon, a Zombie Walker, and a Zombie Biter.



FINAL FANTASY: PLAY ARTS KAI
(Square Enix Products)
Save those pennies for super-poseable figures based on three of the most popular *Final Fantasy* characters ever: Cloud Strife, Squall Leonhart, and Gabranth, each of whom will come with additional hands and sword accessories.

BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM and ARKHAM CITY (DC Direct)
The greatest Batman game of all time has inspired two assortments of figures. The first set, currently on sale, includes Batman, The Joker (with Scarface), Scarecrow, and Harley Quinn. The second set, featuring Batman (Armored), Bane, Poison Ivy, and Zsasz, hits this May. And later this year, look for figures to coincide with the much-anticipated *Arkham City* (as well as a comic-book prologue).

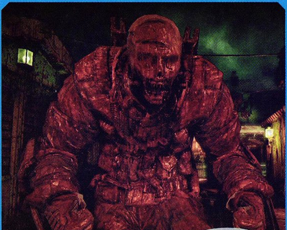
KILLZONE (DC Direct)
DC Direct continues to heap love upon PlayStation fans with this two-figure assortment, featuring the iconic Helghast Assault Infantry trooper and Helghast Sniper, also on sale this spring.

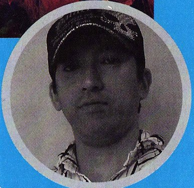


PORTAL 2 (The IP Factory)
Portal fans will be rewarded with a highly detailed statue based on the game's troublemaking turret. Valve is working closely with The IP Factory on the designs, as they did with the *Left 4 Dead* statues currently available, so expect another top-line product this spring.

5 Damn Strange

Resident Evil creator Shinji Mikami sheds light on Shadows of the Damned





What makes a good horror, psychological thriller game?
Craziness and consciousness.

Tell us about some of the enemies we'll face within *Shadows of the Damned*.
A good example of one of the enemies in the game is in the demo. It's a monster that's almost like, made out of blood. He's just covered in it and in his mouth is actually a harmonica, so instead of speaking there is just harmonica music coming out and it's very unique. You have these weird enemies. In the game there are some things like stuffed animals on the wall. Someone comes and just takes that and runs away. There's really weird and interesting stuff in there. The player has to run around and try to shoot him because that's an integral point of using the light and darkness. If you don't shoot them and get these light areas safe, then you're going to die, so you need to shoot them.

It's neat that hell has opera in it. Are you making a statement there?
This has nothing to do with anyone's like or dislike of opera, it is actually based off Akira Yamaoka, who does the game's music. He really loves opera, so he wanted to put it in somehow, and I think that's where it came from.

RATING PENDING

RP

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PS3

PlayStation 3

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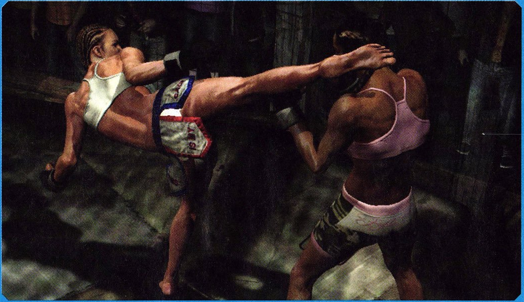
The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

6 Supreme Being

Meet Felice Herrig, the first female in an MMA fighting game



How did you get involved with *Supremacy MMA*?

A lot of it had to do with my manager, Brian Butler-Au. One of his other fighters, Jens Pulver, was in the videogame, and he took a chance and threw it out there to 505 games. He pushed for Michele Gutierrez [pictured, far right] and me to be in the game.

You've fought professionally, and you've starred in reality TV. How does being in a game compare to those other experiences?

I like that it reaches a different audience. It reaches the gaming community, not just the MMA community. Everything that I have done has really led up to this. I set my sights high and I have big hopes and big dreams. When I do things, I go all out. I like to think of myself as a superhero, so I always envision myself playing a superhero in a movie or something like that. I've always known that I was meant to fight and I always knew that I was destined to be a star.

Tell us about your involvement in the game.

I've had a lot of involvement in the game. I mean, it's my likeness, and we're working really hard to make sure my image is portrayed the way I am, but 505 Games wanted to create a movement. They wanted to promote the fact that this is the first MMA game with female fighters. So we started a fan page on Facebook called Equal Fights, you know like "equal rights," and we did a Rosie the Riveter photoshoot. I've always wanted to do a Rosie the Riveter photoshoot!

Let's talk about that a little bit. The UFC still won't let female fighters in. Do you think your participation, not just in the sport of mixed martial arts but in a mass-market videogame, will help break the barriers that are still there for female fighters?

Oh definitely. I mean, obviously, it's gonna take some time, but it's just going to be a snowball effect. Opportunities eventually will be there, but it's a progression. Just like MMA for men, it took a lot of progression. A lot of people thought it was just male cockfighting. Slowly but surely sports for females will be seen just like sports for males.

Is there a difference in how men and women fight?

Obviously women move differently. Some of them are a lot more technical and a lot more graceful. Men have that brute strength factor, but women are more flexible, we have better hips. I don't know how I am as a female, because I have a killer instinct and I'm really strong. A lot of people have said that I kind of fight like a guy.

How does it feel to be both a sex symbol and someone who evokes fear in men?

It's nice to have those polar opposites. I like proving people wrong and showing people that you don't have to be categorized. Like, I don't have to be categorized as just a girly-girl or just an athletic girl. I like to be seen as a sex symbol. What girl isn't flattered by the fact that men are turned on by them or think that they're hot? Any girl who would say they don't care about their looks is pretty much lying.

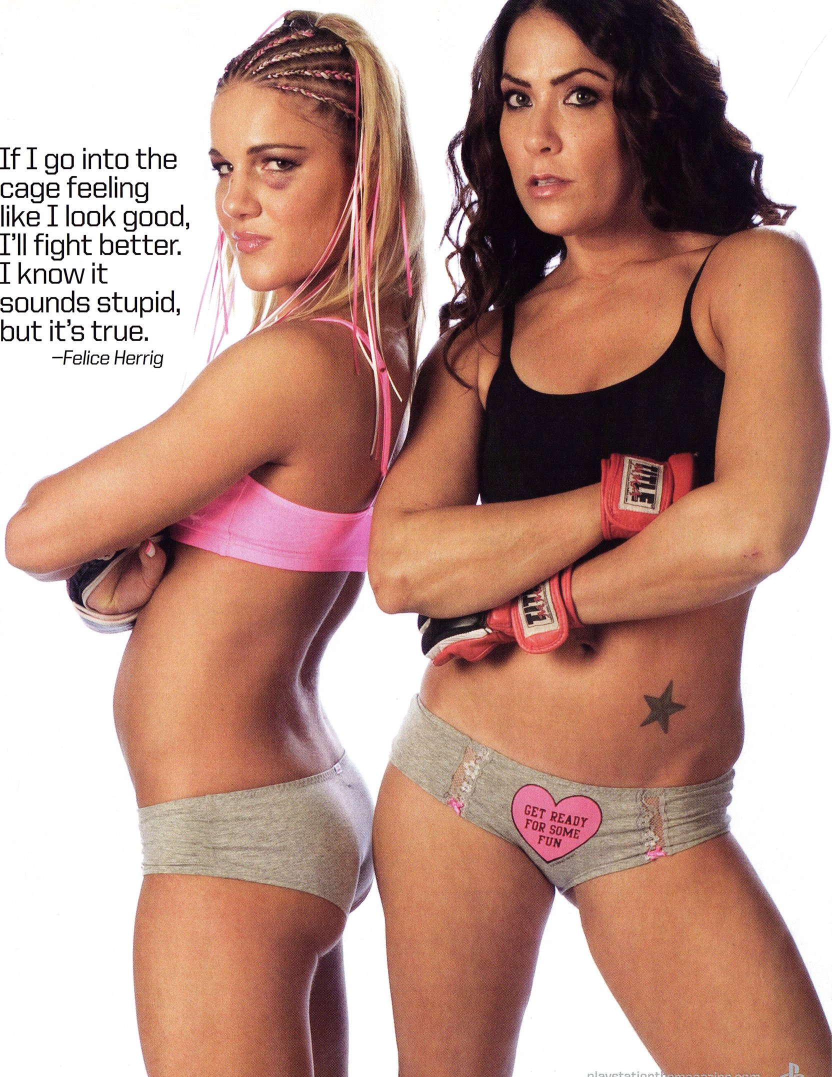
We all know girls care more about their looks than men. Not only do I want to be the hottest female in the sport, but also the best pound-for-pound female fighter in the sport. I take my fighting very seriously. I take the sport very seriously. My diet is impeccable. My heart and soul, everything is about fighting. But then again, there's so much more to me than just fighting. I am a girly-girl. I design and custom-make all my fight outfits. I like to go into the ring feeling pretty. I like to make sure my hair looks good.

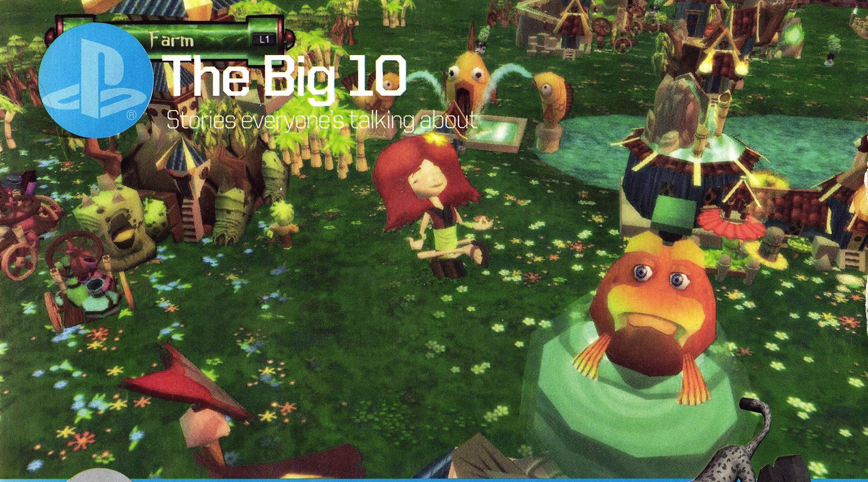
So you bring glamour to the ring?

I do. I like to be fashionable when I fight. And you know, for women, or just anybody in general, if you feel like you look good, you exude more confidence in yourself. If I go into the cage feeling like I look good, I'll fight better. I know it sounds stupid, but it's true. I always joke around and say, "Every fight is like prom night." And everybody knows that for a girl, prom night is all about the dress.

If I go into the cage feeling like I look good, I'll fight better. I know it sounds stupid, but it's true.

—Felice Herrig


TITLE
GET READY FOR SOME FUN



7 No Pressure

Akimi Village might be the most relaxing PSN destination ever

We've chilled out in the PlayStation Network before. We've floated along with the breeze in *Flower*. We've grooved our way through the trippy *PixelJunk Eden*. But we've yet to play a game that absolutely eliminates all the threat and tension from the experience yet somehow remains compelling enough to keep us playing for hours. That is, until *Akimi Village*.

From developer NinjaBee—a Utah-based indie studio best know for its Xbox Live Arcade-exclusive *Keflings* games—comes its first foray onto PSN. Similar in style to *A Kingdom for Keflings*, *Akimi Village* is at its heart a real-time strategy game, but it's one that doesn't seem to mind if players take their sweet time. The goal is to purge an island in the sky from the grip of darkness and gloom by mobilizing the diminutive Akimi to rebuild their land. The difference? No enemies, no ticking clock, no chance of getting it wrong—just the blissful act of continually improving the island until all is finally right again.

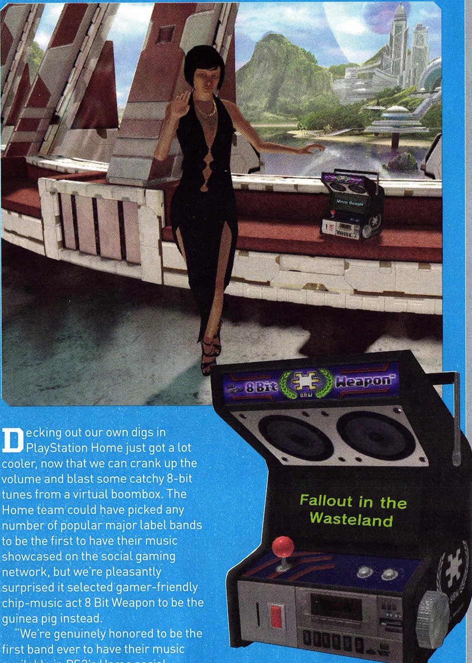
"You don't have to frag somebody to have a good time playing games," says Brent Fox, NinjaBee's co-owner and art director. "In *Akimi Village* there is no pressure. You can work at your own pace and play the way you want to. Deep strategy is available but it's not necessary to enjoy the game. You don't need to worry that someone will destroy the village you have worked so hard to build."

Having explored *Akimi Village* for several hours, we couldn't agree more. As a human who awakens in this fantastical world, we set to work picking up Akimis and placing them where we wanted them to toil, gathering resources, manufacturing building blocks, and moving forward on a gently branching tech tree. Soon enough, we had our own little virtual ant farm working diligently for us, and we'd alternate between wandering around to check on our progress and making modest course corrections to reallocate our workers.

So far, it's addictive and fun—but don't dismiss this as a mere casual game. "You'd be surprised at how often core gamers try it out and, hours later, find they just can't stop playing," Fox says. "We constantly see players thinking they will play for a couple of minutes, but they end up playing for hours. They want to build just one more building, free one more Akimi, or purify that next section of land to unlock the cool-looking tool. Building up a village and creating a city is fun and surprisingly addictive."

8 Retro Dance Party

Chiptune band 8 Bit Weapon makes a rocking debut on Home



Decking out our own digs in PlayStation Home just got a lot cooler, now that we can crank up the volume and blast some catchy 8-bit tunes from a virtual boombox. The Home team could have picked any number of popular major label bands to be the first to have their music showcased on the social gaming network, but we're pleasantly surprised it selected gamer-friendly chip-music act 8 Bit Weapon to be the guinea pig instead.

"We're genuinely honored to be the first band ever to have their music available in PS3's Home social network," 8 Bit Weapon's Seth Sternberger says. "What's even more amazing is that Home director Jack Buser and his team took a risk by choosing a chip-music band, instead of a top-40 band, to be the first band to provide music content."

Considering the duo crafts original music from a mix of old-school videogame hardware, the new virtual music player item that now delivers their fist-pumping jams to Home users is appropriately retro. A cross between an '80s-era stereo system and a classic coin-op arcade cabinet, the stylish 8 Bit Weapon Boombox is loaded with three versions of the band's music tracks: "Closer," "Fallout in the Wasteland," and "Micro Boogie." Home users can also catch selections from the band's "Chiptune Odyssey" audio loop library playing in Central Plaza. Check out Home or 8bitweapon.com for more info.

9 The Readers' Most Wanted

It was only a matter of time. PS3's biggest "active" star (now that *God of War's* Kratos is, currently, retired from full games and in his Very Special Guest Star phase), Nathan Drake has grabbed the top spot, where he'll likely stay for months to come. There's nothing wrong with that: He's big-time likable and awesome in equal measure. The other notable entry: *Final Fantasy XIII-2* breaks into the top five; even with almost no info about the game, our readers still can't wait to take another ride with Lightning.

01 *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*
02 *Mortal Kombat*
03 *Twisted Metal*
04 *Resistance 3*
05 *Final Fantasy XIII-2*
06 *inFamous 2*
07 *SOCOM 4: U.S. Navy SEALs*
08 *Batman: Arkham City*
09 *Shift 2: Unleashed*
10 *BioShock: Infinite*
11 *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One*
12 *Battlefield 3*
13 *MLB 11: The Show*
14 *Mass Effect 3*
15 *WWE All-Stars*
16 *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier*
17 *Dragon Age II*
18 *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*
19 *Max Payne 3*
20 *F.E.A.R. 3*

FFXIII-2

BIOSHOCK: INFINITE

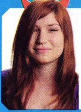
Stats in this chart appear courtesy of OTX Research. All games are PS3 titles scheduled to release after March 1, 2011. Polling period was Feb. 6, 2011, to Feb. 19, 2011.

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

10 Is it good to be bad?

Because if anyone should be your moral compass, it's us



Yes

Says the angel-swatting anti-heroine

Anne Lewis

Girls like bad boys. It's just the way it is. I find myself constantly rooting for the dark side, and it only makes sense that my love of villainous types in movies, television, and books would carry over into the world of videogames. If there's an opportunity to be evil in choice-based games like *Fallout*, *inFamous*, and *Mass Effect*, I take it.

Being loved by all may be what some people want, but I'm not a very threatening person so I have to turn to videogames in order to feel the full range of a person's fear. I'm sure my desire to slay all who oppose me says a lot about my character—as I'm sure my infinitely benevolent adversary will point out—but mischief and mayhem are not my only motivators for making such malicious main characters.

The path of malevolence can be a lonely one, because as many of us know, when everyone hates you, no one wants to help you. Playing through a game as an evil character, especially in a title like *Fallout*, forces me to find new ways to get things done. After all, it's hard to sweet-talk someone who's shooting at you. So it's not all about a quest for unfettered power; there's a certain fragility to being feared that's lost on those who only do what's right.

No

Says the insufferable do-goodnik

Gary Steinman

Here's a little secret about being bad: it ain't very fun. Oh, sure, if you're a charmingly diminutive intern like our dear Anne, then evil power fantasies are the perfect antidote to a long day of being abused by the grizzled cast of graybeards shambling through the drafty halls of PTOM Towers. But for the rest of us? The allure of acting like an asshat isn't enough to get a gamer like me to punch the populace in their collective snoot at every turn.

I can easily rationalize this away by reminding myself the greater reward comes to he who waits. It's a soteriological (look it up) approach to interactive entertainment: Do good now, reap benefits later. And despite what Anne says, it's also more challenging, because it's so darn easy to stray into the welcoming abyss of the darkness.

But I like playing good for a different reason. In real life, I often have *no* choice in how I approach others; my free will is hampered by societal norms, making it impractical to act like evil Cole in *inFamous* and zap anyone in my way. So when a game gives me the *illusion* of free will, I tend toward the good because it's a choice that I'm allowed to make, rather than one that's made for me. That's often enough to keep me in the ranks of the righteous.

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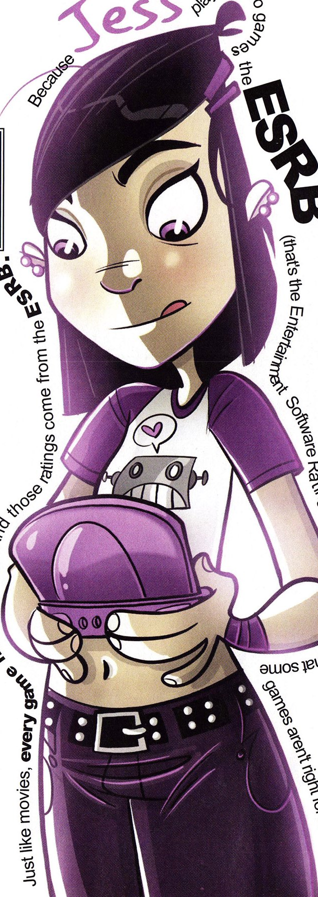
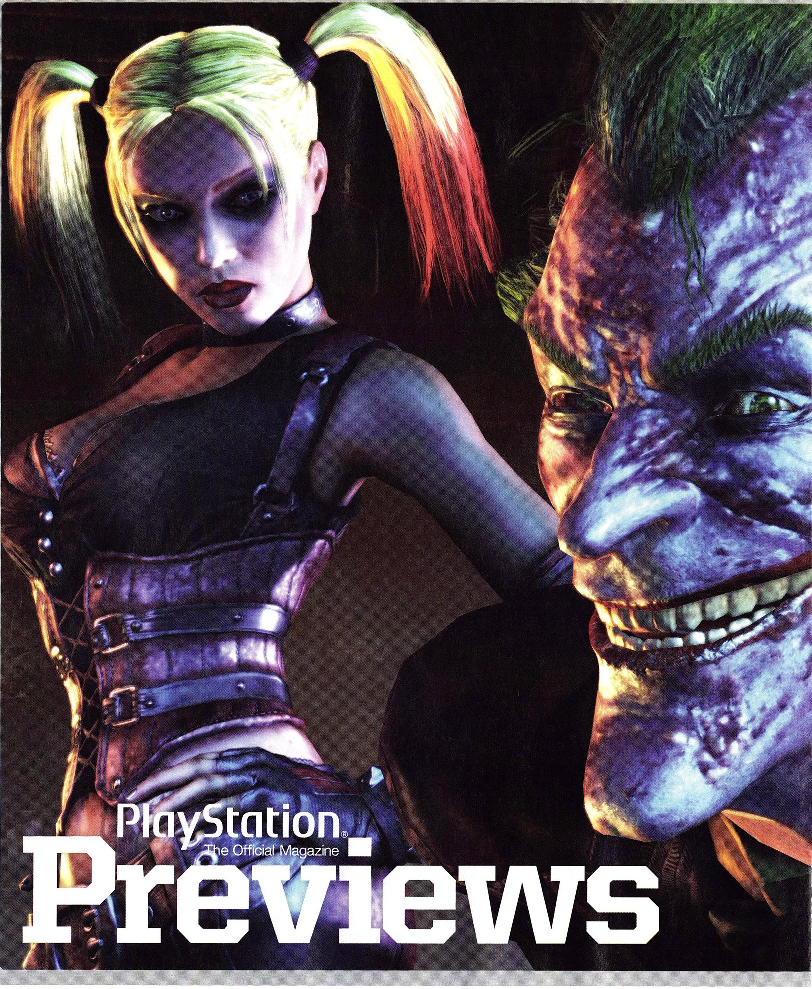
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB



Because **Jess** plays video games the **ESRB** (that's the Entertainment Software Rating Board) **understands** that some games aren't right for everyone.

Just like movies, **every game has a rating.** And those ratings come from the **ESRB.**

www.ESRB.org



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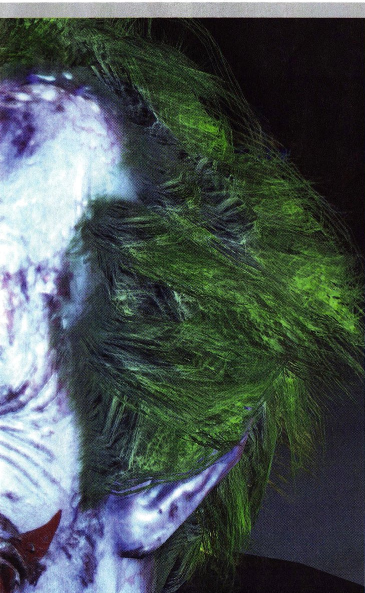
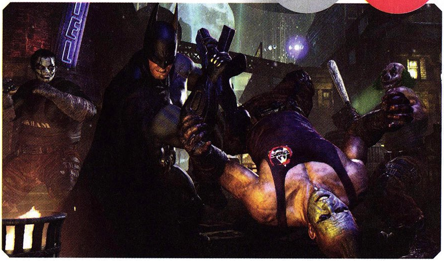


Quick Pitch

Batman
Call it tough psychotherapy. Batman's going to clean up the asylum.

The Joker
The clown prince of crime wants to try out his all-new, all-malevolent material on Gotham.

Rogues
Harley Quinn. The Riddler. Mr. Zsasz. Catwoman. This is a Gotham City of crime.



UPDATE Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment** Dev **Rocksteady Studios**

Batman Arkham City

Desperately seeking asylum

Mankind's history reads like a love letter to bad decisions: Waterloo, the Edsel, New Coke, allowing Roseanne Barr to sing the national anthem at a public sporting event. Topping them all is Arkham City, someone's idiot plan to close two correctional facilities and place criminals and superthugs alike within the confines of a disused and derelict portion of Gotham City.

This will not end well.

In Dark of Knight

Eighteen months have passed since the conclusion of the gripping third-person adventure *Batman: Arkham Asylum*. Now, things have gone according to plan, meaning they are proceeding to hell in an express elevator. This is what happens, it seems, when the Joker and a series of Batman's mortal enemies make the plans.

To swipe liberally, this is a city of crime; *Batman: Arkham City* takes the adventure right to the streets of Gotham. Two-Face has kidnapped Catwoman. The Joker is out there somewhere; he's recovered from his bout of monsterism. Serial killer Mr. Zsasz taunts Batman via a series of ringing phones, and Riddler, content to lurk in the shadows in *Asylum*, prepares to confront the Dark Knight physically.

Gotham's a dark vision as done by developer Rocksteady Studios. Batman perches on top of a building and in the background we can see a neon sign for Ace Chemicals, the place where an anonymous thug was transformed, via chemical bath, into the Joker. Intelligence, gleaned from the reworked cryptographic scrambler tool, points our hero in the direction of Two-Face and the Gotham City Courthouse.

"All of these main, big criminal masterminds have got their own agendas within Arkham City," says Rocksteady's marketing game manager Dax Ginn. "Two-Face's primary objective is to build himself a power base. He's an inmate who's recently been transferred here, and

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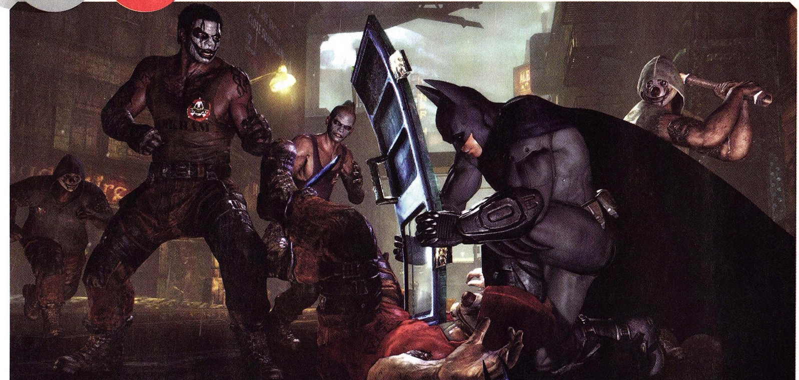


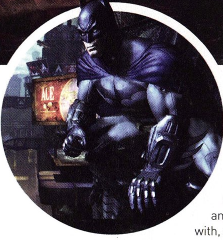
Batman takes, "Can you get the car door for me?" in a literal manner.

he's looking to establish his gang and establish himself as the guy to be feared."

Getting to the courthouse—or anywhere, really—is half the fun in *Arkham City*. Batman can leap off buildings and soar to the ground below, or he can hitch a ride with a passing helicopter used to monitor Arkham City's inmates. As he tours the asylum's grounds, we can shift to detective vision to highlight goons on the streets below, manhole covers leading to the sewers, potential informants with gossip waiting to be beaten out of them, and Riddler's question-mark collectibles.

The courthouse, the would-be seat of Two-Face's power, has been remade in the scarred criminal's image. His lickspittles, similarly, wear masks modeled after their boss: pristine on the righthand half, burned and mutilated on the left side. Catwoman hangs upside-down, on trial for her life.

In this introductory mission, *Arkham City* seems to go easy on players and heavy on Batman's internal monologue to guide us through the minefields. As Batman shifts to Detective mode, the game notes there are 48 enemies afoot, and some of them are packing. "Taking out the thug with the gun is the key," Batman growls. "Without him, the rest of the room won't be a problem."



Batman can perch high above Arkham City and take in its sights. Note the Ace Chemical billboard in the background.

Combat proves as fluid as ever, with Batman sliding and gliding gracefully across the room. As was the case with the last game, enemy strikes are both announced by, and highlighted with, a series of squiggly white lines acting as dodge/evade/counter prompts for us. But Batman's repertoire of face-busting techniques has now been augmented by double takedowns in which two foes are dispatched by ramming their bodies together, and wrestling moves such as the chokeslam.

Batman's wonderful toys also get a

Visit Gotham Your guide to scenic sights and Dark Knights

Ace Chemical Plant
Avoid this run-down factory (where the joker was born!) like the plague.

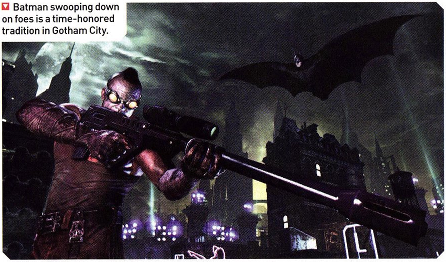
Crime Alley
This section of town is notable only for its abundant deviant element.

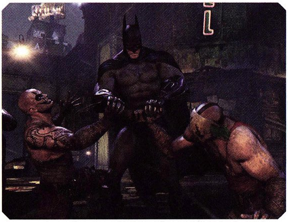
Arkham City
Arkham Asylum and Blackgate Prison combined. In Gotham!

Wayne Enterprises
Billionaire mogul Bruce Wayne's company is headquartered here.

Amusement Mile
Oddly, this creepy theme park offers few amusements.

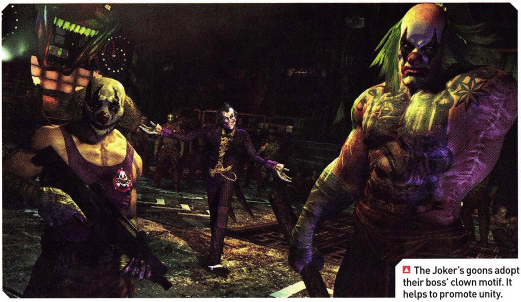
▼ Batman swooping down on foes is a time-honored tradition in Gotham City.





▲ Batman knows goons commonly eat pizza with their right hands. By crushing these hands into jelly, he's ensuring more pizza for the law-abiding citizens of Gotham City.

▲ The Joker's fun house is not, strictly speaking, fun. We're talking safety violations, and it smells like its (dead) former owners.



▲ The Joker's goons adopt their boss' clown motif. It helps to promote unity.

Combat proves as fluid as ever, with Batman sliding and gliding gracefully

makeover here. As before, all of the gizmos can be improved; our combat prowess earns experience, which can be used for this purpose. Ginn says, "All of Batman's gadgets have upgrade paths, but the forms they adopt as they upgrade are different to what they were in *Arkham Asylum* because the challenges he faces are different."

The closure of Blackgate Correctional Facility and Arkham Asylum, and the creation of Arkham City prompts this alteration in Batman's toolset. "Batman has seen the establishment of this super-prison, he's seen what's going on, and has been preparing for the challenge that he knows is coming around the corner," Ginn says. "So even though you start *Arkham City* with the same core gadgets that you finished *Arkham Asylum* with, they upgrade in very different ways."

No Joke

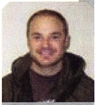
All signs in *Arkham City* point to a rejuvenated Joker.

When Two-Face fails to kill Catwoman, Joker seemingly steps in to complete the task. A shot is fired and it is only through Batman's timely intervention that the assassination attempt is thwarted. A bullet hole and a shattered window provide the clues; their analysis leads Batman to the shot's origin.

Joker does not make an appearance in this demo, but his girlfriend Harley Quinn does. Quinn sports a new, tight leather costume and her familiar psychotic demeanor. She's got hostages, her associates have guns, and Batman, well, has problems.

Or does he? As two goons debate the Dark Knight's fate, Batman has his smoke pellets at the ready. The goons were initially confident, but are now reconsidering their bravado. It's a genuinely humorous moment. "It's not like he has a reputation for breaking free of traps and smashing people's faces," Goon #1 tells Goon #2. "Oh, no! That's right! That's exactly what he does."

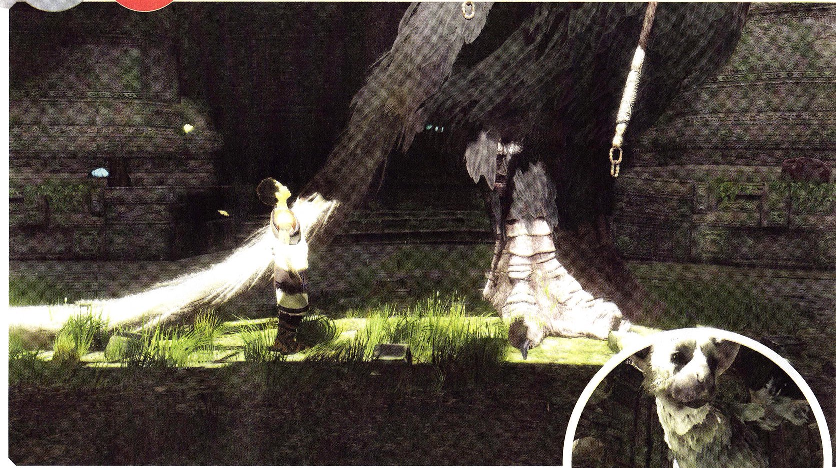
Exactly. **GREG ORLANDO**



Dev Talk

"I love diving through windows and think the level designers do, too."

Dax Ginn
Marketing Game Manager, Rocksteady Studios



FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **Holiday** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Team Ico**

The Last Guardian

Never be a beast of burden

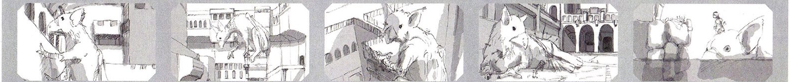
It begins in a walled citadel. Soft light filters in from above, struggling to dispel the shadows while stirring up motes of dust in this this naturalistic setting. We see a boy leaning against something big—enormous, really—a gryphon-like creature, but with more mammal than bird in it: the soft eyes of a dog, the leonine grace of a cat. It's called Trico, and whether that's the name of the species or this particular creature, we don't quite know. The only thing that's clear: We need to get out of here, and we'll need Trico's help to do so.

The boy tugs on Trico's ear. He calls his name. Eventually, Trico rolls over, stretches, wakes up. What's established from this very first interaction: Trico has a mind of its own. Director Fumito Ueda, who's guiding us through this first-ever gameplay demo, notes players will often need to find ways to coax and cajole Trico into action.

So the boy explores the castle. He finds a large urn, struggles to carry it (with expressive animation reminiscent of Ueda's *Ico* and *Shadow of the Colossus*), then drops it in a sunny spot. Naturally, Trico ignores the urn, so the boy ventures into another room to find an urn overflowing with an oozing green liquid. He pops off the lid, and Trico is immediately drawn to the aroma, thrusting his giant head into the room like a mouse poking through

▲ What is Trico? Is it the last guardian? Whatever it is, we'll need it to help solve many puzzles.

Friends in Need Top-secret sketches hint at how the boy and Trico work together



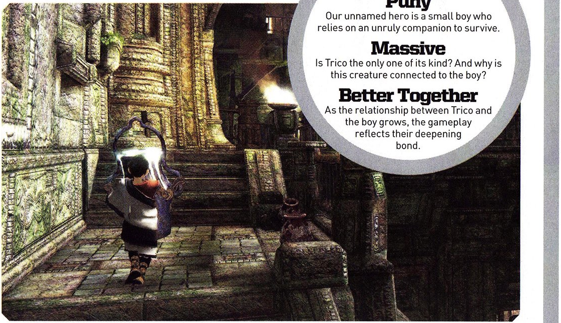
A ladder to unreachable heights, a shield from arrows, a bridge across troubled waters—all possible, it appears, when boy and beast combine forces.

Quick Pitch

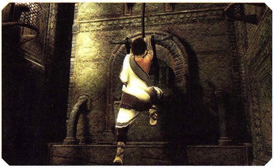
Puny
Our unnamed hero is a small boy who relies on an unruly companion to survive.

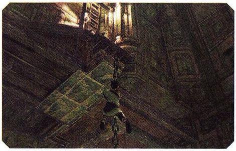
Massive
Is Trico the only one of its kind? And why is this creature connected to the boy?

Better Together
As the relationship between Trico and the boy grows, the gameplay reflects their deepening bond.



Toting heavy urns is a good all-over-body workout and a great way to solve some challenging puzzles





A stamina bar always reminds us of the fragility of the boy.

a mouse hole. The boy takes the urn upstairs, tosses it across to an otherwise unreachable balcony, and from below Trico stands on his hind legs to reach toward the urn, giving the boy an opportunity to climb the creature to get to the balcony.

This is just the beginning of the game, Ueda reminds us, and the relationship between the characters is currently "very shallow." But as the game proceeds, the bond will develop and Trico will, potentially, be more reactive. Either way, this is much of what *The Last Guardian* is about: solving puzzles and exploring this world by finding the right tools to convince Trico to do the boy's bidding.

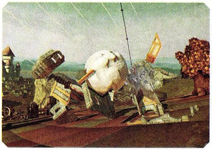
The game also has other signature Ueda gameplay, with lots of clambering, leaping, and skulking. When he encounters a shadowy guard in heavy armor, the boy must outrun his antagonist. But when caught—at least in this demo—the boy doesn't resort to combat, instead wriggling away and running to a wall to climb his way to safety. Whatever the action, a stamina bar always reminds us of the fragility of the boy, ensuring every movement is carefully measured.

After escaping the guard and clambering ever higher, the boy looks down and calls to Trico. Once again, the beast ignores the boy. ("He seems to be in a bad mood," Ueda jokes.) Eventually Trico flies upward, and after the boy pulls a lever to open a door, the two of them exit, wrapping up this first tantalizing taste of actual gameplay in the eagerly anticipated *The Last Guardian*. **GARY STEINMAN**

Dev Talk

"In most cases, people will see 'reality' as simply taking a photograph and making a texture out of it to put on a wall. But I don't think creating a reality is about constructing something to be as close to what you can see in real life. A more handmade approach is better because reality is inherently something crafted in the mind's eye."
Fumito Ueda
Director, Team Ico

Could Be a Contender



Format **PSN** ETA **Spring** Pub **Atlus USA** Dev **Ace Team**

Rock of Ages

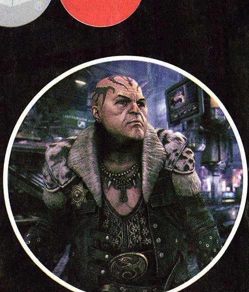
This one looks like it's going to rock

The Premise
It's time for rock and/or roll with this goofy take on a tower defense game. We build up our defenses to thwart an enemy boulder from crashing through our castle door, and our opponent does the same for our oversized slab of stone. Then we get to roll, and that's when things get smooshed.

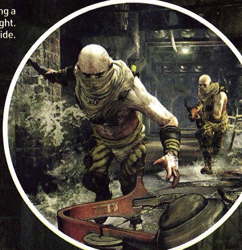
The Reality
What tower defense game wouldn't be greatly augmented by the addition of huge rolling boulders and gratuitous destruction?

The Hook
There are endless tower defense games out there, but absolutely none featuring boulder rolling and jumping, cows of war, boss fights against Vlad the Impaler, skeeball-style minigames, and historically themed stages inspired by artistic movements/periods such as the Renaissance and Rococo.

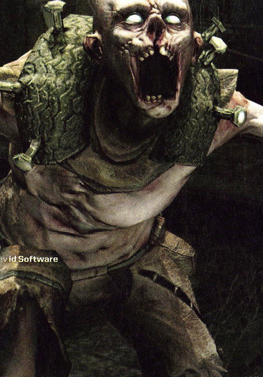
The Chances
Smashing, absolutely smashing.



Though *Rage* is a pure shooter at its heart, it's packed with quirky, colorful characters.



Words of advice: Don't bring a boomerang to a crossbow fight. It's just plain suicide.



Vehicles are arcadey and fun, but also essential for quickly navigating the vast wastelands.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **September** Pub **Bethesda Softworks** Dev **id Software**

Rage

Lock, load, drive

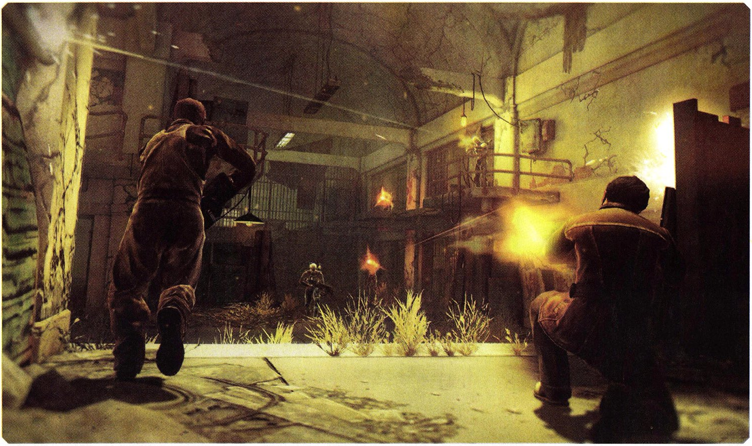
After wandering the mutant-infested wasteland of id Software's *Rage*, creative director Tim Willits informs us the post-apocalyptic first-person shooter is based on a true story: "The Apophis. Google it," he insists, referring to an asteroid that paranoid scientist-types believe could obliterate Earth in 2036.

If the prophecy's true, the planet's going to be a much cooler place, at least for Mad Max fans. Id's first major release since 2004's *Doom 3* retains the best elements from its previous headshot-scoring series, while injecting some of the genre-mixing concepts that drive hybrid hits such as *Borderlands*. Of course, as the granddaddy of the first-person shooter, this means id has the basics down pat: We can, and will, bloody the walls of tight interior environments from behind the face-ventilating power of hand-cannons.

We did exactly that in the survival-themed game show Mutant Bash TV. Similar to *The Running Man*, but with irradiated monsters, the death sport saw us battling increasingly challenging swarms of flesh-eaters. Thankfully, our pistol was armed with "kill-bursts," ammo we'd crafted earlier with *Rage's* RPG-esque engineering system. The killer cocktail packs the punch of six regular bullets in each shot, so mowing down waves of monsters was a breeze. That said, we wished we'd reserved more of the mutant-splattering shells for Bash TV's final showdown; facing a towering, tentacle-whipping meatbag appropriately dubbed the Kraken, we found ourselves frantically utilizing a strafing-and-shooting strategy until the beast hit the floor.

While the frenetically paced indoor combat sticks closely to the developer's corridor-shooter comfort zone, traversing *Rage's* sun-soaked terrain offers opportunities we never had in *Doom 3's* dimly lit hallways. In addition to being populated by quest-giving crazies, the expansive landscape is perfect for test-driving the game's off-road vehicles. Sporting familiar controls—accelerate/brake with the right/left triggers, and steer with the analog stick—the rides are a blast to tool around in, especially when chasing down ground-scorching meteors, as we did in a bonus-granting side mission.

We look forward to gripping the wheel and squeezing the trigger again in *Rage's* twisted world. Hopefully we'll get to do more of both before that hurtling space rock lands on us. **SHANE ZACHARY**



HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **September** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Insomniac**

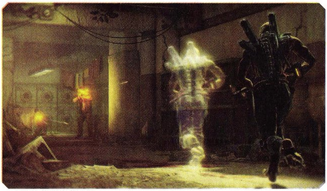
Resistance 3

Getting more intimate with Chimera

When players head online for *Resistance 3's* head-to-head battles this September, they'll notice some changes. The powerful human commandos have been replaced by more ragged-looking guerrillas, for starters, but the biggest difference is that *Resistance's* defining multiplayer feature—its enormous, 40- or 60-player matches—has been scaled down to an austere 16-player cap.

That may sound like a step back, but it's in the name of creating a tighter, more involving experience—and it comes with some significant gameplay improvements, not the least of which is a new system of perks and abilities. During a hands-on skirmish through a ruined prison in Chad, we were able to not only tinker with weapon loadouts, but also choose and unlock perks—like increased run speed, better run-and-gun accuracy, or (our favorite) the ability to make three scorpion-like Leapers erupt and attack from our defeated corpses. We also got a chance to play around with active abilities, like laying down bubble shields or team ammo-supply points—or, after a kill streak, turning invisible (as Chimera) or deploying a portable shield (as humans).

Combined with bloodier, more satisfying combat, these enhancements made the matches a lot of fun. While we haven't seen play modes other than team deathmatch, there's already potential for *Resistance 3* to become something amazing. **MIKEL REPARAZ**



△ We'd want to turn invisible, too, if we were ugly, buggly aliens. Oh wait, we can turn invisible when we play as Chimera? Sign us up!

△ Bigger isn't always better. *Resistance 3* offers up more intimate 16-player battles in order to keep the action tight and focused.

UPDATE Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Naughty Dog**

Uncharted 3 Drake's Deception

Deception in three dimensions

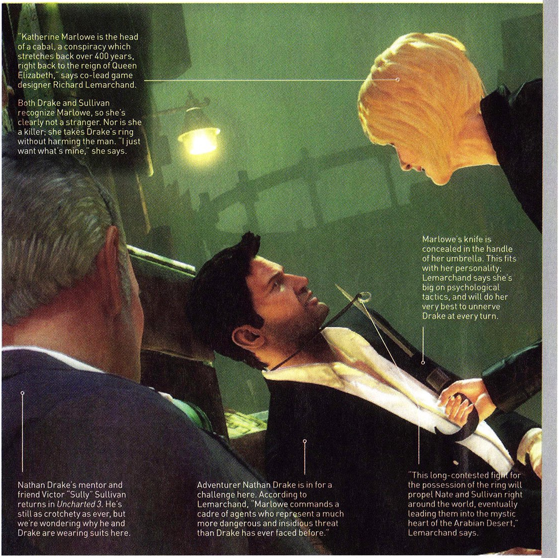
It's raining everywhere, including in adventurer Nathan Drake's heart. Drake and his partner Victor Sullivan are trapped, captured by the nefarious Katherine Marlowe and her henchman. Now would be the perfect time for a perfectly timed comic quip, and Drake will not disappoint.

"Careful now," he tells Marlowe. "Wouldn't want you to melt."

Drake and Marlowe are natural enemies. She's after Drake's ring and her quest to retrieve it will take Drake and Sullivan around the world—and into the third dimension, providing we have a 3D TV and special glasses.

If ever a game was made for 3D viewing and play, it's *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception.* Expect this extra-dimensional technology to highlight the danger Drake faces at regular intervals, whether he's hanging on a chandelier as it's slowly pulled from its base or fleeing from an inferno and its delicately falling embers. At times, the camera will shift its perpective to highlight a scene, say, putting Drake in the foreground as he watches Sullivan in the background awkwardly trying to navigate across a narrow beam.

A brief look at Drake and Sullivan in 3D was enough, but we're further buoyed by online multiplayer and coop-erative options. We are, truly, ready to be deceived. GREG ORLANDO



"Katherine Marlowe is the head of a cabal, a conspiracy which stretches back over 400 years, right back to the reign of Queen Elizabeth," says co-lead game designer Richard Lemarchand.

Both Drake and Sullivan recognize Marlowe, so she's clearly not a stranger. Nor is she a killer; she takes Drake's ring without harming the man. "I just want what's mine," she says.

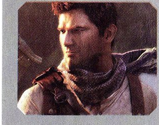
Marlowe's knife is concealed in the handle of her umbrella. This fits with her personality; Lemarchand says she's big on psychological tactics, and will do her very best to unnerve Drake at every turn.

Nathan Drake's mentor and friend Victor "Sully" Sullivan returns in *Uncharted 3*. He's still as crotchety as ever, but we're wondering why he and Drake are wearing suits here.

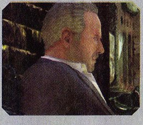
Adventurer Nathan Drake is in for a challenge here. According to Lemarchand, "Marlowe commands a cadre of agents who represent a much more dangerous and insidious threat than Drake has ever faced before."

"This long-contested fight for the possession of the ring will propel Nate and Sullivan right around the world, eventually leading them into the mystic heart of the Arabian Desert," Lemarchand says.

Deceivers, all! A look at the cast of Uncharted 3

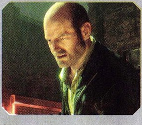


Nathan Drake
Naughty Dog modeled Nathan Drake after daredevil Johnny Knoxville. Oddly, actor Mark Wahlberg will play Drake in the upcoming *Uncharted* movie.



Victor Sullivan
He's a man with a criminal past, but Victor Sullivan has great affection for his protégé Nathan Drake. Sullivan is playable in *Uncharted 3's* cooperative mode.

Katherine Marlowe
She's the head of a secret organization and wants desperately to capture Drake's ring, which originally belonged to explorer Sir Francis Drake.



Cutter
Marlowe commands a cadre of elite warriors, and it seems Cutter is her main man. He's clearly a match for Drake when it comes to fisticuffs.

Elena Fisher
Where's Elena? When we left her at the end of *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*, the plucky journalist and Drake were on their way to becoming a couple.

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **December** Pub **2K Games** Dev **Digital Extremes**

The Darkness II

Mob mentality, mob rules

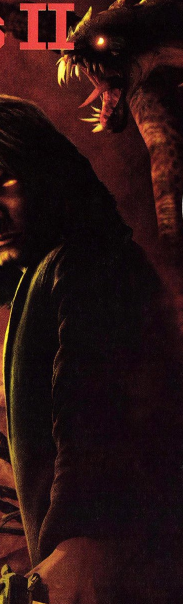
Jackie Estacado, star of the Top Cow comic *The Darkness*, has come up in the world and down into the depths where the light doesn't shine. Elevated to don of the Franchetti crime family, the former assassin should be enjoying the high life.

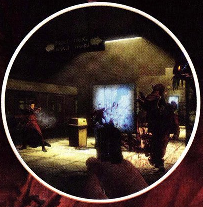
Except a creepy, diseased, and crippled old man has firebombed Estacado's restaurant, captured him, and is having a goon drive spikes through his hands. The old man wants what Estacado possesses, and we're not talking about his suave, good looks and manly charm. The man is after the darkness, a supernatural force Estacado controls.

As Estacado in the first-person perspective, we'll get to wield the darkness, which appears in the form of two snake-headed tendrils (call them, informally, Grabby and Slashy). With these tendrils, we can destroy lights that might interfere with our powers, grab enemies, and tear them to bits. Special execution moves can be performed with these tendrils, too, such as "the anaconda" to squeeze a victim to death and "the wishbone" that rips a foe in two. All manner of pistols and shotguns augment our darkness powers, and we can fire a gun in each hand while still directing the tendrils. The developers call this quad wielding.

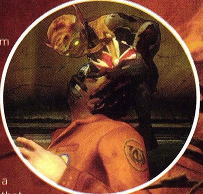
An A.I.-controlled ally, an imp called a darkling, serves both as comic relief and a tool in our arsenal against our foes. At times, the darkling will attack our enemies and present us with their guns as a gift. "He's a narrative character," says Sheldon Carter, project director for the game. "He lightens the mood and saves your ass."

The Darkness is in fine hands: Digital Extremes is known for its work on quality shooters such as *Unreal Tournament*, and comic writer Paul Jenkins, he of *The Darkness* and *Spectacular Spider-Man*, returns to provide the game's story. We shan't be afraid of the dark. Not here, anyway. **GREG ORLANDO**

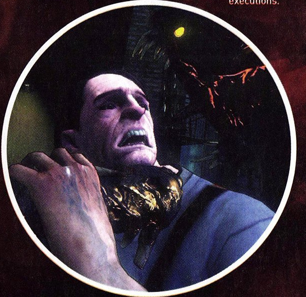


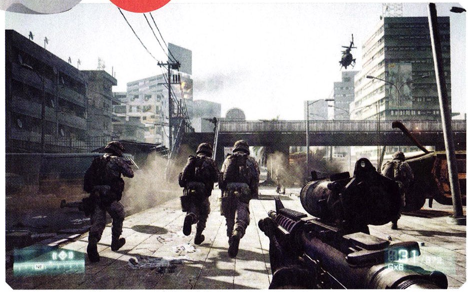


Light is no ally to Jackie Estacado. If he knocks out the illumination, his powers kick in.



Grabby and Slashy can combine to perform a series of gruesome executions.





FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **Fall** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **DICE**

Battlefield 3

Modern warfare gets frostbitten

Swedish developer DICE plans to make videogame warfare seem dangerous with first-person shooter *Battlefield 3*. This is clearly evident as bullets zip and crack past soldiers' heads and concrete shatters into slivers.

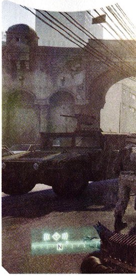
"It's not just about turning up the volume to 11, which you've seen in some games, where you just do more: more enemies, more weapons, more explosions," says *Battlefield 3's* executive producer Patrick Bach. "You turn that into fatigue in a way, where you stop caring."

Instead, DICE plans to hammer on our senses, at least the ones it can manipulate within the framework of a videogame. This takes the form of disintegrating concrete as our soldier, under fire from an Iraqi sniper, wiggles his way across the top of a building in order to kill his assailant. Cover loses its integrity after multiple hits, and we're harried by screams and the whip-smack of bullets around us. When the sniper across the way blows up with the building he'd been hiding in, well, we can all feel relieved the danger is over. Until the earth starts quaking, that is.

Cold War

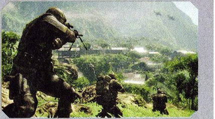
"How did this part of the world get so f–cked up?" an onscreen soldier asks during Bach's brief demonstration of the game. Blame DICE and its many technical improvements for this reaction; the game will be powered by an all-new Frostbite game engine that promises more realism by virtue of its ability to render lighting and generate in-game destruction of objects. It doesn't take long to see Frostbite's gorgeous hand at work; *Battlefield 3* drops us into Iraq and then proceeds to tear the place apart with a catastrophic earthquake. Buildings splinter and shower, reducing the urban setting into a smoking, smoldering wreck. How this ultimately affects our mission and the persistent threat of the terrorist conglomerate—the PLR—remains, for the moment, unrevealed, but Bach promises it will have major ramifications for the storyline and gameplay.

There's good reason to believe that *Battlefield 3* will be a hell of a firefight; expect hostilities to resume before the holiday season. **GREG ORLANDO**

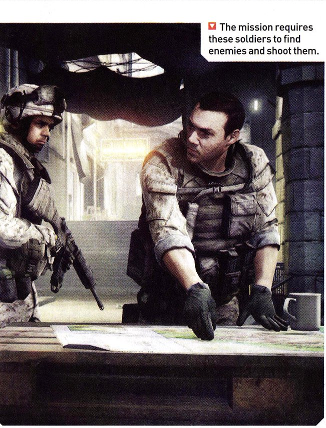


On the Battlefields

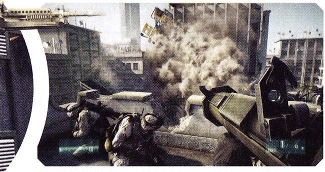
Battlefield: Bad Company (PS3, 2008)
This story-based shooter put us in the role of a U.S. Army screw-up, Preston Marlowe, as he and his fellow soldiers embark on a quest to recover—that is to say, steal—a truck full of gold. Sharp and funny, *Battlefield: Bad Company* proves to be one of the PS3's best first-person shooters, both in terms of its single-player campaign and its up to 24-player multiplayer.



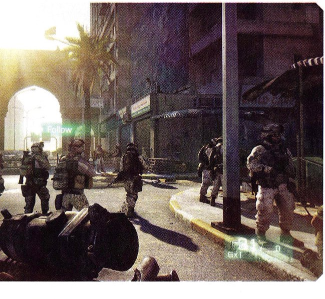
Battlefield: Bad Company 2 (PS3, 2010)
Preston Marlowe and his squadmates return for another grand adventure in the U.S. Army's "Bad Company." This time around, Marlowe and his comrades jet around the world in an attempt to seize a powerful scalar beam weapon. The single-player campaign is entertaining, but again, this edition of *Bad Company* is noted for its series of stellar multiplayer modes.

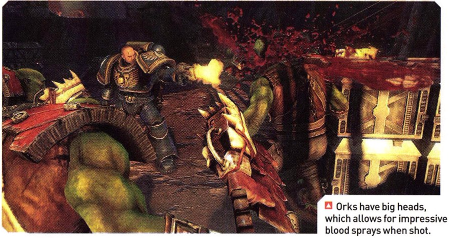


The mission requires these soldiers to find enemies and shoot them.



Here's Frostbite 2 at work. Scratch one sniper and the building he's in. When the smoke clears, we can see the extent to which the building has been wrecked—that is, to great extent.





Orks have big heads, which allows for impressive blood sprays when shot.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **August** Pub **THQ** Dev **Relic Entertainment**

Warhammer 40,000
Space Marine

Honor bound to kick alien ass

They had us at "chainsaw sword." Ever since we first learned of this weapon, we'd been dying to rev it up and tear through some orks. We finally got our chance during a recent demo at Relic's Vancouver office, home of the honorable and fabled Space Marines.

The chainsaw sword did not disappoint. Though *Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine* most closely resembles a third-person shooter, the game allows us, as a space marine, to instantly swap between traditional gunplay and *God of War*-esque buttonmashing. Both sets of mechanics feel fully realized and cleverly coexist on the controller—with shooter controls mapped to the triggers and melee attacks assigned to the face buttons.

Seamlessly switching to the sword to hack away at the enemy horde felt completely natural, so much so it's surprising we don't see this type of dual gameplay more often. The melee combos lacked variety and the special fury attacks didn't seem gratuitous enough for such a macho, larger-than-life game, but watching enemies explode into clouds of blood and viscera was satisfying enough.

The shooting portion seemed similarly solid: Characters have a great sense of weight—with heavy clanking accompanying every surprisingly nimble step. Brainless enemies and a scarcity of ammo occasionally dragged the experience down, but these kinks may still be ironed out before release.

Much of *Space Marine* remains under wraps—including co-op and competitive multiplayer—but rest assured, the game's shameless violence is shaping up nicely. **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2012** Pub **Activision** Dev **Radical Entertainment**

Prototype 2

The strong, violent type

Call James Heller the Swiss Army Knife of death. That's how Radical Entertainment refers to its new infected protagonist and star of the open-world adventure *Prototype 2*.

Heller gets to live out the ultimate power fantasy. He can shoot ropy, pulpy tendrils to ensnare enemies and hang them from great heights. His super-human strength and agility allows him to yank a turret from a tank, perform a gorgeous mid-air flip, and then slam the turret down into the already crippled vehicle, completing its destruction. We eagerly await more of Heller's destructive fury; sadly, this one must wait until 2012. **GREG ORLANDO**

▲ James Heller is one of the only African-American leads in a videogame.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **May** Pub **Bethesda Softworks** Dev **Splash Damage**

Brink

Good griefing

Our teammates are idiots. Whether they're stealing our kills (and the precious experience points that come with them) or reviving us just in time for a hail of enemy gunfire to send us straight back to death's door, nothing ruins an online first-person shooter as quickly as an uncooperative squad. *Brink*, however, hopes to resolve these and other issues, and our latest hands-on experience left us feeling as if it might succeed.

For starters, teamwork is rewarded handsomely

Armored Core goes online, and we'll be carving out our own empire for all to be crushed by.

FIRST LOOK Format **PSN** ETA **TBD 2012** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **From Software**

Armored Core V

V for Fighting

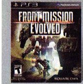
Let the crushing go online, From Software said, and it was good. The latest iteration of the popular mechanized warfare series *Armored Core* will play out entirely over PSN sometime in 2012.

We'll even need to go online for *Armored Core V's* story mode. We can create our own mechanical monstrosity, customize it to our cold-and-black heart's delight, and abuse the mecha's powers by stomping a virtual mudhole on anyone who even looks at us in an improper manner, real or imagined. This, however, is just a sideshow. On the main stage, a war will be raging, waiting to suck our mechanized selves into it.

The war allows us to form alliances, build an army, and use our strategic planning skills to carve out an empire. Any territory we seize can be customized with approximately 500 different items including traps, gun batteries, and barricades. After building up our defenses, we can go on the attack, storming enemy-held territory in order to force our opponents to tell us what they did with the plans for the Death Star—or just smash them up because we happen to enjoy that sort of thing.

Bigger is better, and the developers promise *Core V* will contain, pound for pound, the most amount of content of any of the series' previous titles. What this entails, certainly, bodes well for the destruction to come. **GREG ORLANDO**

Can't Wait? Play this



Front Mission Evolved

(PS3, Square Enix) Mechanized warfare goes online here, with eight players able to adventure together in a makeshift wolfpack—a fine warmup for *Armored Core V's* online play.

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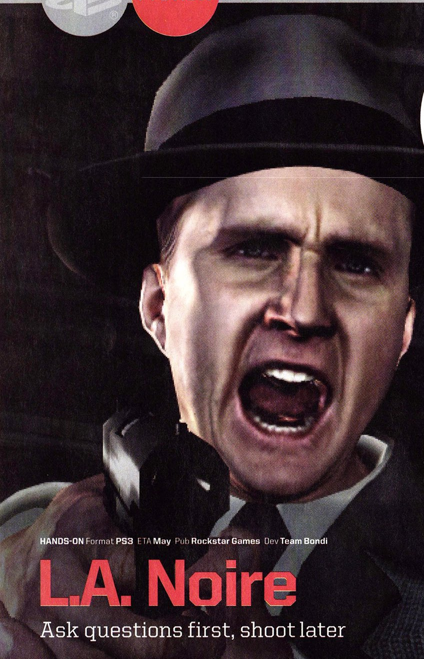
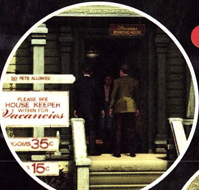
with staggering amounts of experience. Since *Brink* features layers upon layers of experience point-driven character customization—with options for everything from voice and appearance to weapons and skills—this provided an effective incentive for simple cooperation without forcing any complex planning. We regularly witnessed soldiers "buffing" teammates' weapons, medics throwing syringes to the wounded, and engineers hacking enemy systems for the benefit of all.

This is especially good news considering the game obliterates the line between single- and multiplayer in favor of a single story-driven cooperative campaign. We only got a small taste of the way story and gameplay intertwine, but it already works better than we anticipated. Combined with the intuitive parkour-style movement and fast-paced gunplay, *Brink* really may be the cure for the common shooter. **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

Where the hell is... Inversion?

Namco Bandai's *Inversion* changes the rules for third-person shooters, flipping gravity so our hero can fight on the side of buildings, and nullifying it, too, so we can huck buses at aliens. Weighty matters have delayed the title, but we've played it and are—cautiously—optimistic for its release next year.





1 Team Bondi has spent a great deal of effort recreating 1940s Los Angeles, including authentic signage and architectural flourishes.

2 Good morning, detective. Now, inspect a naked, mutilated female corpse with a message scrawled on her body in lipstick: "Kiss the Blood. BD."

3 Mission endings can often vary, from the perp winding up in cuffs to spattered all over the concrete.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **May** Pub **Rockstar Games** Dev **Team Bondi**

L.A. Noire

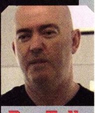
Ask questions first, shoot later

As *L.A. Noire* draws closer to its May release, we were granted a more intimate look at one of its many investigations. The case, titled "The Silk Stalking Murder," is one in a seemingly related string of murders of young women (all bearing striking resemblance to the real life "Black Dahlia" case from 1947), their bodies left naked and bloody after the crime. And it begins with just that: the cold, anatomically correct naked body of a young Hispanic girl staring us in the face. It's rather gruesome, realistic stuff, and certainly not for the queasy.

As Detective Cole Phelps, our first job is to inspect the corpse for possible clues. A trail of blood eventually points us to the victim's husband, one Angel Maldonado. When we arrive at his apartment, he reacts violently; this, combined with testimony from others regarding their frequent fights and impending divorce, would seem to implicate Angel. But all is not what it seems in the world of *Noire*.

What follows is a series of visits to witnesses and locations, and in the hour we play, only several minutes of "action." We got the feeling while playing *Noire* that the game may get us one step closer to the long-promised "interactive narrative experience"—the medium's *Citizen Kane*, to borrow a much-overused term. It's a subtle thing: In many ways *L.A. Noire* is a modern rendition of the point-and-click adventures we so fondly remember, just done with so much style, polish, and realism it feels entirely new. There are awkward moments, of course, not simply because of the unfinished state of the game, but also due to the current state of the art. But absurd as they may be, none break the game's spell.

Crucially, *Noire* does something games have long been trying to achieve: make talking fun. Interrogations are a maze of possible questions that can play out in a variety of ways, and reading the reactions of suspects and witnesses becomes a game unto itself. As with a good serial drama, our taste of *L.A. Noire* has left us eagerly awaiting more. **EVAN SHAMOON**



Dev Talk

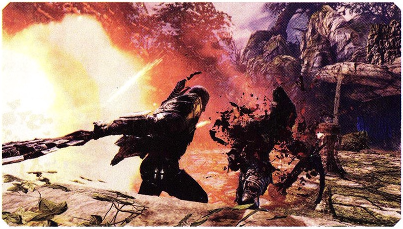
"You turn up at a crime scene, and you've seen that in a million cop shows—so even if you haven't played the game you know what to do. I think people will find the game fresh, but also a bit familiar."

Brendan McNamara
Writer and director, Team Bondi

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **June** Pub **Bethesda Softworks** Dev **inXile Ent.**

Hunted
The Demon's Forge

Forge of the Rings



▲ In *Demon's Forge*, we can play as both a powerful warrior and a female archer.

It's a good thing we hate sentient, sword-wielding skeletons because we spent a lot of time smashing their bony bodies in our recent playtest with self-proclaimed dungeon crawler *Hunted: The Demon's Forge*. Because the game features two protagonists—meaty melee artist Caddoc and scantily clad archer E'Lara—we were able to alternate between ranged, third-person shooting and more garden variety beat-'em-up buttonmashing.

Both playtypes proved serviceable. Caddoc's melee combos seemed repetitive, and without a target-locking system we often felt like we were swinging at air. Still, delivering bone-crushing blows with a variety of weapons—including special "enchanted" weapons earned or discovered through exploration—felt satisfying. E'Lara's bow-and-arrow controls seemed well tuned, though the arrows did less damage compared to Caddoc's hacking.

Fortunately, E'Lara can break out a sword when necessary, and both characters can employ magic and special, upgradable abilities. Imagine if *Dead Space's* upgrade system used crystals instead of power nodes—that's *Forge's* RPG-ish character progression mechanic in a nutshell. Loot also plays a major role; we can collect new weapons and items as we progress, and trust us, health potions are a necessity.

We also lit a few torches and discovered a trick wall or two while sampling the game's puzzle-solving aspects, but we'll have to wait until June to see if *Forge's* riddles hold up. **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

▲ There is more than meets the eye in the battle between the Autobots and the evil Decepticons. There's routine maintenance and oil changes.

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **May** Pub **Activision** Dev **High Moon Studios**

Transformers
Dark of the Moon

Toying with deception

Who can say they've never wanted to control their own giant robot? We certainly can't. Our lifelong dream will be fulfilled once again in *Transformers: Dark of the Moon*, where we can control *many* giant robots.

The new game is a third-person adventure occuring just prior to the third film's storyline, and introduces characters not involved in the movies including Laserbeak, a small bird-like Decepticon often glimpsed near Soundwave in the animated series. It also explains the characters' transitions between the second and third *Transformer* movies: At the end of the second film Megatron takes a beating, and while Activision remains tight-lipped about its new design, the developers revealed players would witness the Decepticon leader's transformation from scrapheap to reincarnated badass.

Players will control Autobots and Decepticons; in one mission the Decepticon Starscream engaged in an aerial dogfight with the Autobot Stratosphere. In Ironhide's level we're tasked with stopping a Decepticon uprising in Detroit.

Levels in the story campaign are based around particular Transformers and their personalities and skills. *Moon* also introduces a new stealth force aspect, allowing players to utilize a hybrid mode between the Transformers' robot and vehicle forms. This hybrid state will feature the vehicle mode's extra armor, while maintaining the robot's weapons, allowing players to drive, shoot, and ram to their robotic heart's content. **ANNE LEWIS**

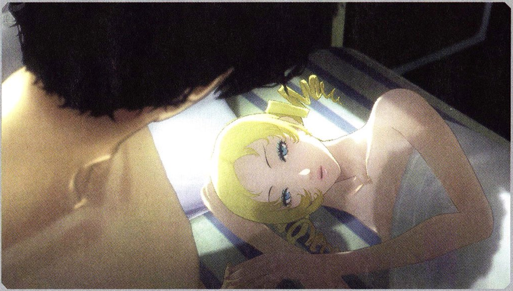
The latest on...

New shots, new games, new info

Catherine

Format **PS3** ETA **July** Pub **Atlus USA** Dev **Atlus**

This kooky game summons up many questions, but we can focus on one: What the hell is going on here? Protagonist Vincent Brooks is hurled into a series of nightmares after meeting and bedding the mysterious titular character, and now we have to put an end to the hero's bad dreams. We can expect sheep (and ram horns that grow from the protagonist's head), block-manipulating puzzles requiring us to climb stairs, adult themes, and about 120 percent of the daily recommended allowance of wackiness. In addition to *Catherine's* story mode, there's a multiplayer option where we can compete against a friend in two separate game modes.

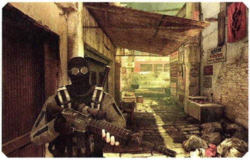


kappa heaven

Ridge Racer Unbounded

Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Bugbear Ent.**

Ridge Racer takes a cue from *Burnout* in this all-new interpretation of the classic racing franchise. Powerslide-happy racing, seemingly, has been replaced by vehicular combat; *Unbounded* is being made by Bugbear, known for its crashtastic arcade-style racer *FlatOut*.



Awakened

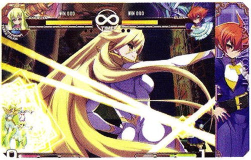
Format **PS3** ETA **TBA 2012** Pub **TBD** Dev **Phosphor Games**

The third-person adventure *Awakened* lets us create and customize a superhero and pit him or her against an invading army. A multiplayer mode lets us to take our hero online so he can clobber everyone else with extreme and, perhaps, super-extreme prejudice.

Earth Defense Force: Insect Armageddon

Format **PS3** ETA **June** Pub **D3Publisher** Dev **Vicious Cycle**

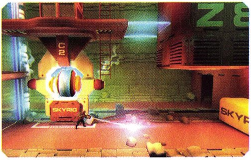
There's not a can of Raid big enough to dispatch these alien bugs, so we'll have to get out the boot of vengeance. Expect 300 different weapons and four distinct soldier types to hurl at our would-be insect overlords.



Arcana Heart 3

Format **PSN** ETA **TBD 2011** Pub **Aksys Games** Dev **Examu**

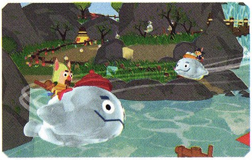
The cutesy, two-dimensional, all-girl fighting game *Arcana Heart 3* lets us pair our female heroes with different elements to create some 500 powerful combinations. *Heart 3* also offers high-definition graphics, a story mode, and online play.



Rochard

Format **PSN** ETA **Spring** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Recoil**

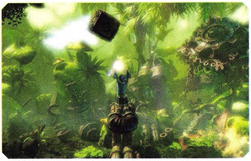
Space mining, engineering tools as weapons, strange alien encounters—this sounds familiar to us, but *Rochard* takes it in a new direction. Players control John Rochard as he manipulates gravity, solves puzzles, and fights space pirates in order to save his missing asteroid mining team.



Okabu

Format **PSN** ETA **Summer** Pub **SCEA** Dev **HandCircus**

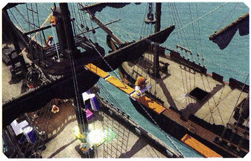
We don't know how cloud whales would be possible in nature, but we do know they are here to save the world from industrial threats by solving cutesy puzzles. When games are as adorable as *Okabu*, we're readily prepared to accept their environmentalist themes.



Trine 2

Format **PSN** ETA **Spring** Pub **Atlus USA** Dev **Frozenbyte**

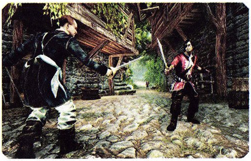
Promising double the rainbows, this physics-based adventure lets us play as a wizard, warrior, or archer. We can switch among the heroes to solve puzzles or, better still, play cooperatively with two friends in order to solve puzzles and advance through this lush world.



LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean

Format **PS3** ETA **May** Pub **Disney Int.** Dev **TT Games**

Yo ho! Yo ho! It's a blocky pirate's life for us... The next entry in the prolific LEGO game series comes complete with swashbuckling, widget collection, and approximately 70 characters from the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film trilogy. All we need now is grog—and lots of it.



Risen 2: Dark Waters

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub **Deep Silver** Dev **Piranha Bytes**

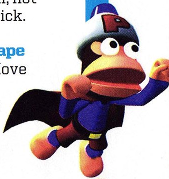
Here's an awesome idea: a pirate role-playing game (or Yarrrr-PG!). Set in a world besieged by hideous sea creatures, *Risen 2* offers numerous islands to explore and monsters to kill with all manner of swords, pistols, muskets, cannons, and funny accents.

Gut Reaction

The right and the blight

▲2011
InFamous 2, *Twisted Metal*, *Uncharted 3*, *Resistance 3*, *L.A. Noire*, etc.

▲3D!
After seeing *Mortal Kombat* and *Uncharted 3* in action, we're starting to believe 3D is the real deal, not some gimmick.

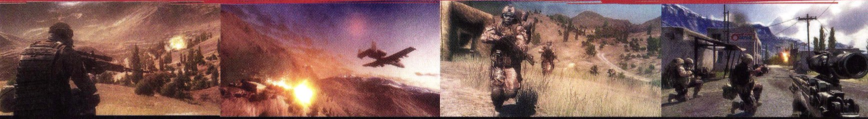


▲Ape Escape
Now with Move functionality? Sign us up for simian capturing detail.

▼3D Doom?
Not every game needs a movie (or two)!

▼Call of Advertising
Homefront goes overboard with the product placement. And it really, really loves its Hooters.

▼Assisted Glitch?
Many games ship with bugs, including game-breaking ones. Capcom's *Marvel vs. Capcom 3* is the latest in a long line. Patches are great but so is thorough playtesting. Catch those bugs before release, consarnit!



For those that choose to serve,
to stand together, nothing less
than full dedication of your life
to your unit is required.

The bond you forge in the
cauldron of war will be stronger
than any you have experienced.
They will see you through,
and be with you always.

Sometimes the only thing
between you will be a look.
No words. Just a look that says
I understand.

And I am honored to be your brother.

FOUR MEN, ONE UNIT.
STAND TOGETHER.

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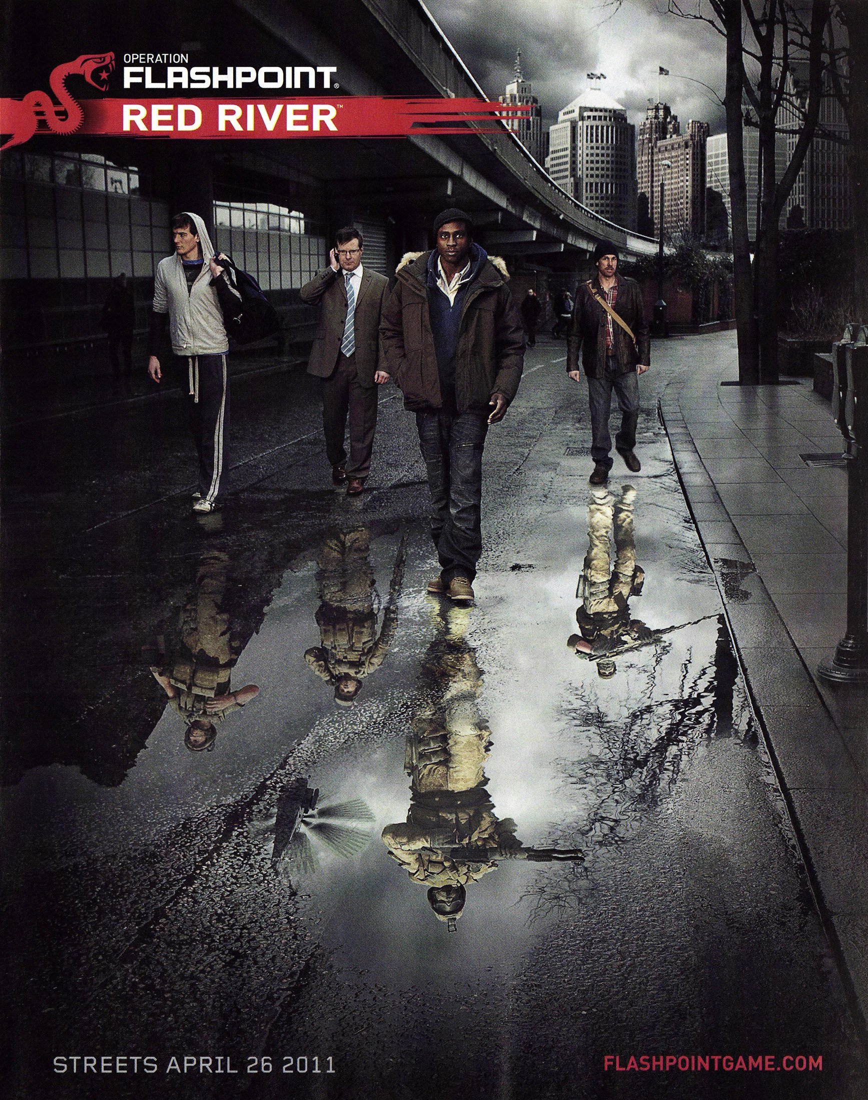

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THERE WILL BE BLOOD

Co-op gunplay, prosthetic legs, and "Kill Leon" in **Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City**

By Evan Shamoon

First things first: *Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City* is not a survival horror game. Rather, it's a squad-based shooter set in the *Resident Evil* universe, compliant with its fiction but approached from an atypical angle. *Raccoon City's* primary mode (though competitive multiplayer will be included) is a full-on co-op campaign played as an Umbrella Security Service member tasked with cleaning up the nefarious company's mistakes. It's fast-paced, run-and-gun fare, and one thing seems certain: More zombies will be killed with bigger guns at a faster clip than in any previous *Resident Evil* game.

RACCOON
BEEF ICE CREAM

Set over the four days of the original Raccoon City outbreak in September 1998, *Operation Raccoon City* is nothing if not nostalgic. The game takes place in the same time and place as *Resident Evil 2* and *3*; interestingly, however, we're no longer on the virtuous side of the conflict, instead stepping into the bloody boots of the Umbrella Security Service, an elite team sent into Raccoon City by the Umbrella Corporation. Our objective is to destroy all evidence of the outbreak (which Umbrella itself unleashed), and eliminate any survivors—including rookie police officer Leon Kennedy. The development's mantra, then—"Kill Leon"—begins to come into focus.

As has often been its approach in recent years to further its appeal to the ever-expanding western market, Capcom sought the expertise of a western developer to simultaneously reinterpret and preserve what has long been a Japanese franchise. In this case, the Japanese publisher decided upon Slant Six, the Vancouver-based studio with a very targeted history, whose work consists solely of three *SOCOM* games: *Confrontation*, *Fireteam Bravo 3*, and *Tactical Strike*.

"The process was very organic," says Slant Six creative director Adam Bullied of the

> "Capcom said: Pitch us a wild idea for a *Resident Evil* game. Pitch us a western idea. Pitch us something that uses your expertise."

Police Officer Zombie tries to lend a helping hand, but, well...at least he tried!

It's good to be bad, sometimes. We get to play this *Resident Evil* adventure as an Umbrella employee.

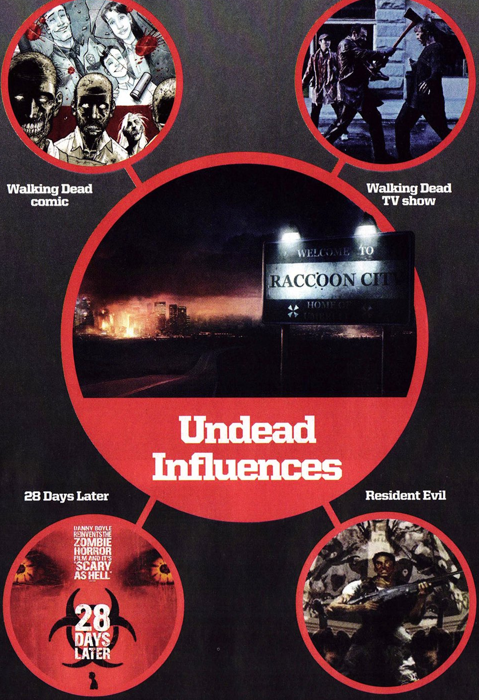
partnership. "They said: Pitch us a wild idea for a *Resident Evil* game. Pitch us a western idea. Pitch us something that uses your expertise." The developer went through a process of pitches and feedback, flew to Tokyo a few times, and eventually sealed the deal. "They really gave us a lot of latitude to throw stuff out, and we talked about different games we played and different ideas we had—it all percolated out from there." Capcom made it clear to Slant Six that it did not approach it because it wanted a Japanese-style survival horror game. Rather, Capcom was looking for a developer with different expertise and a fresh point of view.

A New Horror

While Slant Six is handling all of the nuts-and-bolts development duties, Capcom is still directly involved in the project from its home base in Osaka, working hard to maintain the essential core of what makes a *Resident Evil* game. Because it's not a "numbered" *Resident Evil* title, the team was given a great deal of freedom to experiment. "It's very much a collaboration with Capcom," says lead designer Andrew Santos. "They know *Resident Evil* better than anybody else. They've driven a lot of the decisions that we've taken, and we've been coming up with a lot of ideas to get to this very interesting place. From a personal point of view, I feel this is really innovative for *Resident Evil*." Santos, whose design résumé includes the first two *Skate* games for Electronic Arts, joined the team when he learned what its next project was going to be. "That's the reason I came here. Once I found out what it was, I was on board," he says.

"This is a fusion game," Bullied says. "This is something essentially Japanese—*Resident Evil*—which I think is maybe the epitome of Japanese game design. This is also from a company that's made western shooters." Bullied cites *Left 4 Dead* and *Dead Space* as influences, but insists *Raccoon City* is something unto itself. "This is essentially a new game," he says. "The easy thing to do would be to say, 'Let's make a *Resident Evil*-skinned *Left 4 Dead* clone'—but that would not be a good *Left 4 Dead* game, and it wouldn't be a good *Resident Evil* game. It's not the same game. It's not any of those games."

Undead Influences



The making of a creature-killing feature as done by Slant Six

What goes into rethinking a classic zombie franchise? "Every obscure zombie anything," Adam Bullied says of the team's research for its work on *Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City*. "We've been through it all—every joke zombie, every overly serious zombie, every B-movie student film with splattered ketchup everywhere."

He cites Frank Darabont's *The Walking Dead* as a primary inspiration. "The interesting thing is that the modern zombie horror, the modern zombie genre actually starts with *Resident Evil*. *28 Days Later*, and all that stuff, they took that. The original zombie was like this guy that got out of a grave—'the undead.' And so when you're looking at all that rich material, and you're going from *Resident Evil* to *28 Days Later* to *The Walking Dead*, you can now go back to *Resident Evil* and look at it again, and see that this was the inception of it. It's really cool to be able to play in that."

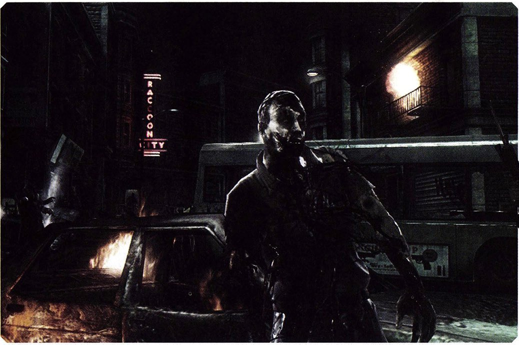
If it moves, shoot it. If it still keeps moving, then shoot it some more. Duh.

What the game actually *is* still remains somewhat of a mystery, but what we're shown at Slant Six certainly recalls *SOCOM*—at least on its surface. The action takes place from the same relatively wide-angle, third-person perspective, and moves along at a similarly brisk clip. The environment we're shown is what appears to be Raccoon City's skid row, with zombies feasting on corpses, debris and garbage strewn everywhere, barrels and vehicles sputtering with smoke and fire. Red flares project flickering lights onto the graffiti-covered walls, helping create a rather unsettling mood.

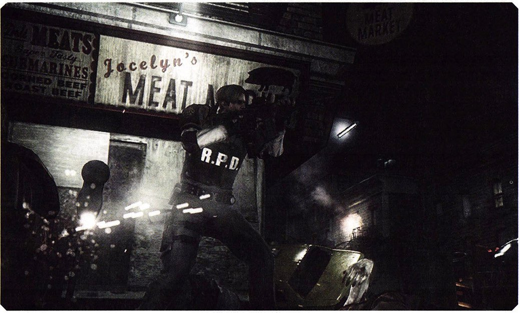
What *Raccoon City* is not, apparently, is a game about headshots. Nor is it as simple as us versus the zombies. Special Ops soldiers have been sent in by the U.S. government to repel the efforts of the Umbrella Corporation (and its security service, i.e. the player), and expose its involvement in the outbreak. What's perhaps most interesting is the team dynamic Capcom and Slant Six are trying to generate, and how injuries sustained become part of a more complex, three-part equation. When the zombies smell blood, they instinctively shamble toward it—a fact that can be used to one's advantage when the blood is that of an enemy soldier, and which becomes a serious liability when the blood is our own.

Raccoon City is not known for its abundant raccoon population, perhaps because the zombies have eaten them.

"There's a hierarchy," Santos says. "The zombies always go for the weakest on the team; if they smell blood, they go for that." That means we'll need to consider who that weak link is, and work to keep him or her safe, while using the zombies' keen senses to track down wounded enemies. Rather than focusing on one-hit kills, we'll be tasked with making human enemies bleed in order to draw out the zombies. "On the Umbrella team it makes for some interesting experiences—and maybe alludes to some of the mechanics to come."



Leon S. Kennedy was a rookie cop during *Resident Evil 2*. Here, he's Umbrella Corp.'s number one target.



Killer Characters

Vector
Spectre

Umbrella Security Service team members include Vector (recon), Beltway (demolitions expert), Bertha (female medic), and Spectre (surveillance). Each character has a different skill set; Vector, for example, has the ability to turn invisible and sneak past his enemies without being seen. "We've given them that movie-like quality and personality," Adam Bullied says. "Like how does a creepy, voyeuristic surveillance operative deal with an outbreak versus a wise-cracking, foul-mouthed prankster demolitions guy?"

> The zombies always go for the weakest on a team; if they smell blood, they go for that."

Triple Threat

As in *Dead Space*, it's possible to dismember zombies, and Bio-Organic Weapons (BOW) are added to the mix as well (a brief shot of the Tyrant, who some may remember from *Resident Evil 3*, closes out our demo). "It's more than zombies," Santos says. "We have a lot of other characters. I can't say too much about them, but they behave differently—we're very excited about not just being a zombie experience. You have to think about the guys with guns first, and then the zombies. Zombies really are the environmental hazard."

A full cover system allows players to shoot around corners and over objects, and as we're shown, it's possible to shoot out the lights to darken a given area. The undisputed king of videogame power-ups, the illustrious Green Herb, is scattered about, and players will gain experience points as they kill zombies, unlocking weapons and abilities in the process. Much of what *Raccoon City* will be remains on paper at this point (or perhaps in too rough a state to be properly demonstrated), but we're given a fairly good idea of what the team is gunning for.

"Absolutely relentless combat anywhere you go," producer Masachika Kawata says of the experience the team is trying to create. "The opposing faction is well equipped, as is the USS [Umbrella Security Service], and can also fire long-range weapons. Zombies, on the other hand, have no fear of weapons and attack en masse without a thought…literally. These two different opposition types amalgamate a contrasting gameplay experience never before seen, never mind *SOCOM* or *RE4*." At this point we can't help but feel this formula is also perfect for competitive action, and while details are currently being kept under wraps, there will be online multiplayer modes outside of cooperative play.

R.P.D.
COON POLICE

▼ **All four playable characters have different abilities. Vector can turn invisible.**

In approaching the virus breakout from a new angle, Slant Six was tasked with bringing new characters to the table, and finding plot points where they would encounter the original cast. "This is a new game, and one of the nice things about [it] is that they didn't tell us, 'You're going to make a game and Leon is going to be the star.' Because of the sort of intersecting nature of the game, we had a lot of latitude," Bullied says of the creative process. "The way I personally like to approach it is to create quirky characters, who maybe go against expectations. Every character should have a little bit of something different about them, maybe a little bit of that Tim Schafer approach to character creation. Because standard military characters don't make anything interesting, and it doesn't feel like *Resident Evil*."

Looking back at previous games, Leon, Claire, and the original *Resident Evil* crew certainly had their quirks, and the team was aware that bringing a group of thick-necked western characters simply wouldn't fit the bill. "I mean, if you took [*Gears of War's*] Marcus Fenix and put him into *Resident Evil*, it would feel way out of place," Bullied says. "So there's a lot of sensitivity to that in designing the characters. They need to feel distinct to this game—they need to feel like this is a new chapter in *Resident Evil*. But I think when these characters interact with the *Resident Evil* characters, the canon characters, you'll feel like they belong there." Beltway's prosthetic leg, channeling Rose McGowan's "Cherry Darling" from the Robert Rodriguez film *Planet Terror*, seems to be a studio favorite.

"For years I've often wondered, 'How do they come up with this stuff?'" Bullied says of Capcom's bizarre and memorable track record. "So when I started designing the characters, they basically said: Throw some characters at us, give us a first draft. And those are the characters that are in the game. They never turned around and said: No-no-no-no, we need to teach you how we do stuff." What Bullied and the team at Slant Six learned was that Capcom's process was actually rather similar to its own. "You find out in the end, it's not that different. We sit down thinking we're coming from different places, and we're not."

Fluid Exchange

Santos, who cites *Resident Evil 4* as his personal series favorite, recalls going back to *Resident Evil 2* for research when the project began. "I hadn't played it for years," he says. "And so I started playing it again, and I realized how cinematic that game was. The camera. The fact that the zombies react to you and [the way] they turn around. The cutscenes. When I think about *Resident Evil*, I think of it as being cinematic, dark, scary, survival horror. So, from a game design point of view, it's about getting those components into [our] game. A huge part of our jobs at Slant Six is to reinvent a lot of things to support the gameplay we have today."

"If you're shooting a trooper in the distance and a zombie is approaching you on your left—and if you're a Special Forces soldier and you've got a knife—you should be able to deal with him," continues Santos. "That's the kind of design decision we're making as we flesh out the controls. If you're reaching for your gun—and you do reach for your gun in that control scheme—then you should be able to shoot different parts of that zombie or the BOW. You're a special forces soldier in an outbreak, so you already know how to shoot, how to fight. So it means it's a bit more fluid and there's more of a flow there as you play."

The team at Slant Six has daily videoconferences with the team in Japan, as well as on-site translators to help ease the lines of communication. "Actually, the story of this game for us, more than just a game development story, has been about this cultural exchange and just learning how to work together," Bullied says. "We've had a lot of fun together. We've gone back and forth to each other's cities. We've learned a lot about how each other approaches making games. We've managed to bring a lot of the expertise from both [Japanese and western] experiences together to create this new way." It's precisely this mix of new experiences with traditional *Resident Evil* gameplay that Capcom and Slant Six hope to deliver when *Operation Raccoon City* invades this winter.

Beltway
Bertha

The bonesaw might be a surprisingly effective weapon in *Operation Raccoon City*.

> "There's a lot of sensitivity in designing the characters. They need to feel distinct to this game—like this is a new chapter in *Resident Evil*."

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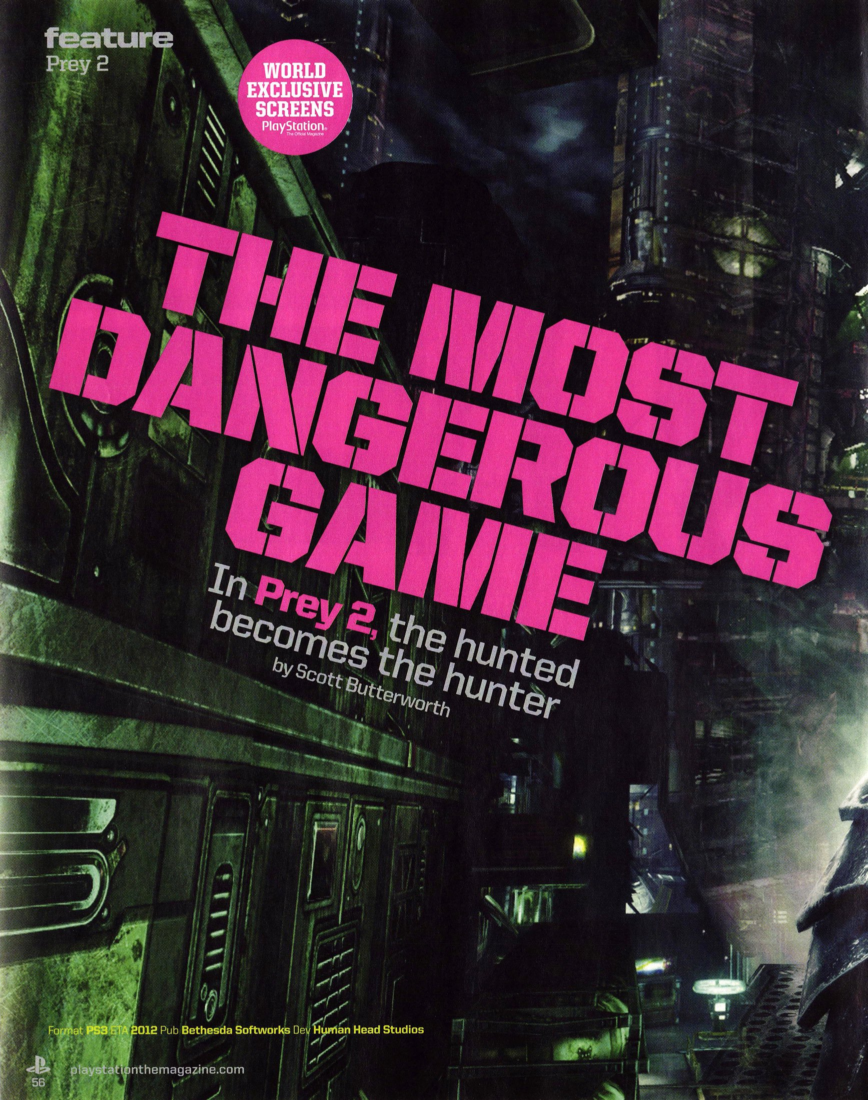


THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME

In **Prey 2**, the hunted becomes the hunter

by Scott Butterworth

Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Bethesda Softworks** Dev **Human Head Studios**

Another mugging. Two Mimerens are stomping the life out of a Majar Et in a claustrophobic back alley, shrouded in the perpetual dusk of the Exodus sky. We could stop them if we wanted. But we've got somewhere to be. Oh well—maybe next time.

With a few fluid movements, we hoist ourselves up to a platform where our contact and his scummy friend sit waiting. Before we can say a word, he informs us that unless we're willing to pay, he won't divulge the location of our target.

That's when a "proposal" pops up: cough up the dough or pursue...other avenues. Easy choice. One quick shot to the chest and his bodyguard stumbles over the edge into a 10-story death dive. Clearly annoyed, our contact decides to help us after all.

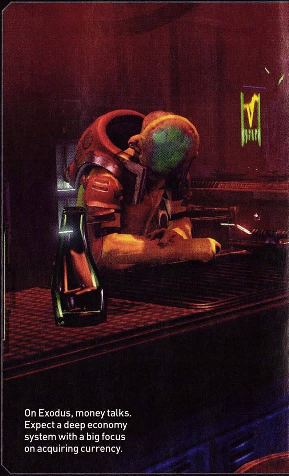
We hover slowly back down to street level (our boots aren't exactly a jetpack, but they get the job done) and quickly make our way to the sleazy club our bounty is supposedly holed up in. We break out our scanner and look for an entrance.

That's when we detect our target's lieutenant. Sure we could just break down the door or sneak in the back way, but taking a hostage sounds way more fun. We approach, pull our sidearm, and smirk as the lieutenant realizes he's been made. Hands above his head, our victim marches begrudgingly to a shady backroom where he informs his boss—and a gang of thugs playing cards—they have a visitor.

That's when things get ugly.

The room explodes into an all-out firefight. We muscle our way past our target's cronies and start to give chase only to find out he's got a personal teleportation device and a limitless supply of proximity mines. Great. It's always something...

It might be a hostile alien world, but cops are still cops and they don't take kindly to overtly bad behavior.



On Exodus, money talks. Expect a deep economy system with a big focus on acquiring currency.

SPACE CASE

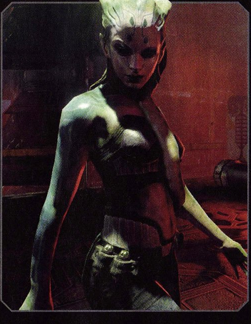
"This is not a reboot," explains *Prey 2* project lead Chris Rhinehart as he narrowly avoids a proximity mine. "This is still building on the core themes of the first *Prey*." Indeed, the two games share many common threads, from alien abduction to first-person combat to the insurmountable odds of a single man against an extraterrestrial horde. Yet watching Rhinehart explore an expansive alien city and freely interact with its various inhabitants, the game seems like a bold change from the linear but inventive first-person shooter that had us on the run back in 2006.

Gone is the massive alien mothership of the original, along with the signature gravity puzzles, spiritual powers, and vaguely stereotypical take on Native American lore. Even leading man Tommy Tawodi wasn't safe. "We love Tommy, but we felt his story was really told," associate producer Matt Bisenius says. "We wanted to explore something else, so we moved on to another protagonist." Taking Tommy's place is seasoned air marshal Killian Samuels, whose plane was snatched from the sky the very same night Tommy and his family were abducted.

Much like the opening sequence of *BioShock*, Killian snaps awake amid the flaming wreckage of what used to be an airplane. He quickly realizes that rather than sinking into the Atlantic, he's on a one-way trip into deep space. One failed escape attempt and a few dead aliens later, he gets a swift boot to the face. Fade to black. Fast-forward a few years and suddenly he's on a heavily industrialized alien planet called Exodus with a brand-new career as a bounty hunter. "In the first game, Tommy was really the prey, but now we're kind of playing with that. Killian is sort of the predator here and there," Bisenius says.

Of course, Killian has no idea how he ended up on this planet or what he's been up to since he got there. As far as we can tell, he's the only human around for light-years and his job has carved him into a hardened anti-hero with a serious reputation. The core narrative will likely revolve around Killian uncovering his past as he makes his way through the harsh, lawless world of Exodus, but the developers declined to divulge details.

Environmental cues like subtle blue lights help guide players as they free-run through the world.



BLACK AS NOIR

Even so, Exodus—as with *GTA's* Liberty City or *Fallout's* Capitol Wasteland—promises to be filled with story. With bounties to hunt, civilians to assist, and secrets to uncover, the game's open-world structure should provide plenty of optional content—much of which will point toward larger events, according to Bisenius. We will travel among locations on both the bright and dark sides of the planet, and while not every section of the world will be unlocked from the start, each location can be freely explored as soon as it becomes available.

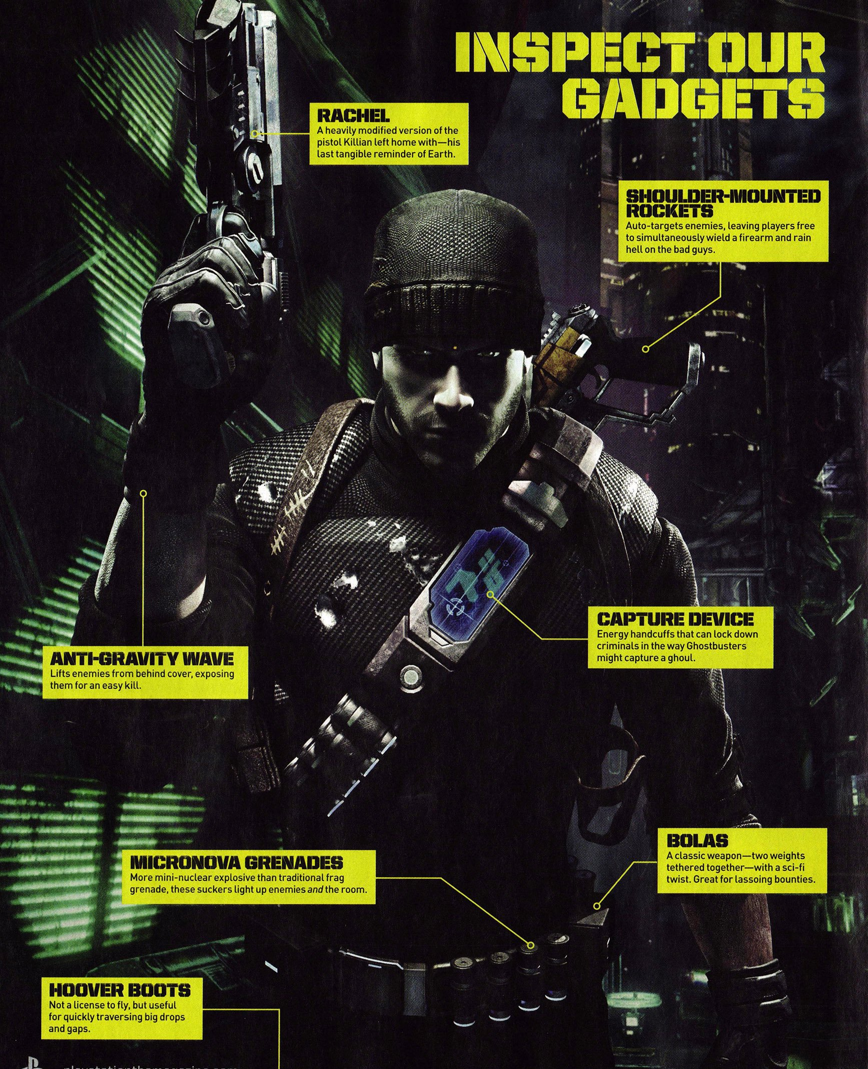
The first locale we saw was a dingy city that looked more like a crowded warehouse than a thriving metropolis, though the occasional neon flourish did add some life. Had *Blade Runner* been set in Las Vegas instead of Los Angeles, it probably would have looked like this. It's a dark take on classic sci-fi themes the developers have dubbed "alien noir"—a thematic approach extending not only to the game's aesthetic, but also to its characters and narrative tropes. Don't expect *The Third Man* in space, but be prepared for plenty of dirty criminals, dirty cops, and dirty dealing.

In fact, much of the tension on Exodus stems from a power struggle between The Regime (the oppressive planetwide government) and the Ceros Collective (the local Mafia types). Being a bounty hunter, Killian won't exactly have to pick sides, but his choice of missions—and the way he completes them—will impact his overall reputation on the planet. Reputation isn't measured in any concrete way (no "karma points" here), but if, say, Killian agrees to hijack some weapons for the Ceros Collective and then chooses to keep them for himself, the mob will be less likely to give him work in future...and more likely to shoot him on sight.

> "IN THE FIRST GAME, TOMMY WAS REALLY THE PREY, BUT NOW WE'RE KIND OF PLAYING WITH THAT. KILLIAN IS SORT OF THE PREDATOR HERE AND THERE."
>
> —MATT BISENIUS

The alien population lends *Prey 2* more of a science-*fantasy* bent than, say, *Deus Ex*.

INSPECT OUR GADGETS



RACHEL
A heavily modified version of the pistol Killian left home with—his last tangible reminder of Earth.

SHOULDER-MOUNTED ROCKETS
Auto-targets enemies, leaving players free to simultaneously wield a firearm and rain hell on the bad guys.

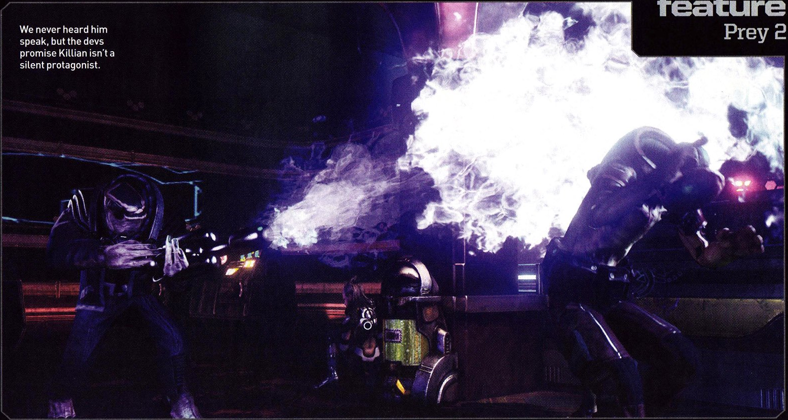
CAPTURE DEVICE
Energy handcuffs that can lock down criminals in the way Ghostbusters might capture a ghoul.

ANTI-GRAVITY WAVE
Lifts enemies from behind cover, exposing them for an easy kill.

BOLAS
A classic weapon—two weights tethered together—with a sci-fi twist. Great for lassoing bounties.

MICRONOVA GRENADES
More mini-nuclear explosive than traditional frag grenade, these suckers light up enemies *and* the room.

HOOVER BOOTS
Not a license to fly, but useful for quickly traversing big drops and gaps.



We never heard him speak, but the devs promise Killian isn't a silent protagonist.

KILLIAN'S ARSENAL OF WEAPONS AND GADGETS CAN WORK WITH JUST ABOUT ANY PLAYSTYLE

GUN RUNNING

Despite its reputation system and open-world structure, *Prey 2* is not an RPG. There are no conversation trees or lengthy cutscenes, and all the "proposals" occasionally popping up are strictly binary: accept a bribe or decline contemptuously; interrogate a captured mark or send him directly to the authorities. Everything's been streamlined to keep the focus squarely on the action.

As with the original, *Prey 2* is primarily a first-person shooter: big guns, regenerating health, a *Killzone*-style first-person cover system, a sticky reticule that's subtly drawn to enemies—the works. However, it's also got a few novel tricks up its sleeve. The first is an expanded movement set that gives players a few parkour-esque abilities, such as vaulting over or sliding under obstacles mid-sprint, fluidly scaling vertical expanses, and hanging from objects for cover. We even witnessed a death-defying leap over a moving train, which—thanks to the first-person perspective—recalled the innovative gameplay of *Mirror's Edge*.

As a bounty hunter, Killian will be able to utilize these skills to pursue his prey, escape from tight situations, and even explore the surrounding environment, platformer style. But the real fun starts when he employs these moves during combat, linking his kills together with fast, fluid movement. This is what the developers call "action chaining," a mechanic designed to reward our skills with seamless, cinematic results: subtle screen blurring, a moment of slow motion, even one-shot kills. "There's no combo counter in the corner," Bisenius says. "It's not that. It's just to make it exciting and engaging and make the player seem powerful."

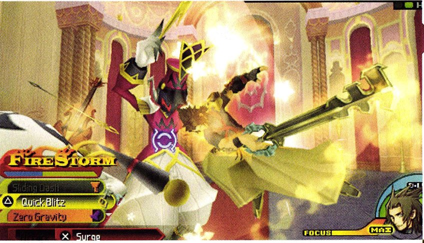
ILLEGAL ALIEN

Of course, that's just one approach. For who those who don't like to run and gun, Killian's arsenal of weapons and gadgets can accommodate just about any playstyle, whether it's hunkering down behind cover and methodically picking off enemies or playing it stealthy and avoiding combat altogether. The gadgets run the gamut. "There will be some cool stuff in there that people haven't seen before," Bisenius promises. During our demo, we saw hoover boots, shoulder-mounted rockets, electric bolas, an anti-gravity wave (which could rip any bad guy out from behind cover), a bright blue flamethrower, and plenty of semi-alien firearms—basically everything a successful bounty hunter could ever need. Additional items and upgrades will become available for purchase as the game progresses—we can't wait to see more of the cool stuff Bisenius teased.

With all these tools at our disposal, it's easy to forget the gritty alien world and crushing isolation that Killian faces. But much like the original *Prey's* Tommy, Killian too must overcome the alien horde on his own. And despite all the changes to the formula—the parkour, the open world, the "alien noir"—the team at Human Head Studios remains true to the original game's vision. "It's sci-fi, one man against many aliens, the predator/prey relationship, and all those things carried forward," Bisenius says. "We really felt this was a continuation of the franchise and we didn't want to just throw something away because we're taking a little turn in the road. We're still *Prey* by all means."

10 BEST PSP RPGS

Since its release in 2005, the PlayStation Portable has become a haven for RPGS. Sure, some might sniff at the PSP, but for aficionados of role-playing games—especially Japanese RPGs—this is the system to own. We sifted through the PSP's library of more than 60 RPGs and narrowed it down to our 10 favorites. By Michael A. Cunningham



1 KINGDOM HEARTS: BIRTH BY SLEEP

PUB **SQUARE ENIX** DEV **SQUARE ENIX** ON **UMD**

What is it? Dubbed "Kingdom Hearts 0" by the developers, this prequel serves as an origin story for the heroes and villains of the series.

Why we love it Easily the best *Kingdom Hearts* offshoot, *Birth By Sleep* has some of the most amazing visuals on the PSP to date. It also returns to its roots with a heavier focus on Disney worlds and characters.

Only in Japan As with *Kingdom Hearts II*, *Birth By Sleep* also saw a Final Mix release in Japan. This version offers a new difficulty level, more boss battles, and an additional secret ending. Sadly, Final Mix is unlikely to see a U.S. release.

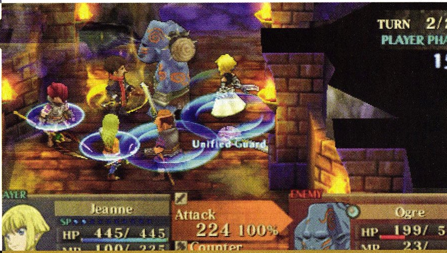
2 JEANNE D'ARC

PUB **SCEA** DEV **LEVEL-5** ON **UMD, PSN**

What is it? Level-5's spin on Joan of Arc's story takes a turn for the fantastic as beastmen and talking frogs fight alongside humans in this tactical RPG.

Why we love it *Jeanne d'Arc* boasts a huge cast of characters, tons of customization options, and challenging battles.

History lesson Many of the game's characters represent historical figures who battled alongside Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc is the French spelling) in the Hundred Years' War fought between France and England. No need to worry though, real-life history doesn't spoil any of the fun here.



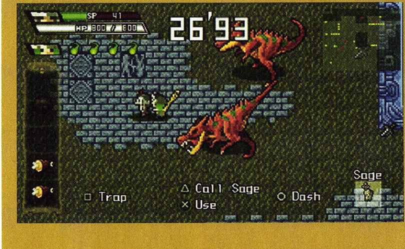
3 HALF-MINUTE HERO

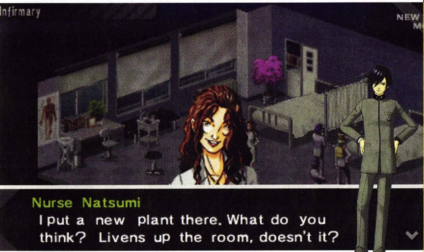
PUB **XSEED** DEV **OPUS STUDIO** ON **UMD, PSN**

What is it? While *Half-Minute Hero* offers four gameplay modes, the Hero 30 section is the highlight. In this variation, players tackle an RPG parody where they must grind, explore, and defeat a boss in less than 30 seconds.

Why we love it The Hero 30 mode is like a puzzle game in RPG garb. It's fast, exciting, and has all the RPG trappings with none of the time-intense hassle. Humorous localization makes the tongue-in-cheek experience even more enjoyable.

Heroic endeavors Once all four of the main sections are conquered, the game's conclusion, Hero 300, is unlocked. While this segment might be challenging, there's a hidden stage in the Hero 30 mode that's even tougher and features an homage to XSEED's *Valhalla Knight* series.





Nurse Natsumi
I put a new plant there. What do you think? Livens up the room, doesn't it?

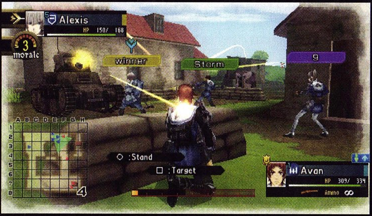
4 SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: PERSONA 3 PORTABLE

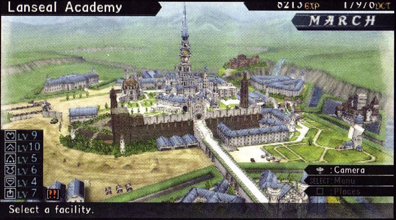
PUB **ATLUS USA** DEV **ATLUS** ON **UMD, PSN**

What is it? A social simulation game combined with a dungeon crawler that requires balancing the intricacies of day-to-day high school activities with evenings of fighting and fusing demons in order to save the world.

Why we love it Even though we played *Persona 3* on the PS2, this update adds the option to play as a female main character complete with new social links. It also weaves in improvements from *Persona 4*, such as full-party control, quick travel, and more save points.

Back to the beginning Atlus released a remake of the original *Persona* for the PSP in 2009. The school activities are absent, and players can negotiate with demons to gain items or get them to join their team.


Alexis
HP 150/ 168
3
morale
winner
Storm
9
○ :Stand
□ :Target
Avan
HP 309/ 334
Ammo ∞
4


Lanseal Academy
MARCH
LV 9
LV 10
LV 5
LV 6
LV 4
LV 7
: Camera
SELECT : Menu
□ : Places
Select a facility.

Svaltia LV5
Tails
I am much better now.
snort
Tails
Sonic
Knuckles
Amy
LV 2
HP 84/84
PP 201/250

5 VALKYRIA CHRONICLES II

PUB **SEGA** DEV **SEGA** ON **UMD, PSN**

What is it? The PSP follow-up to the PS3's *Valkyria Chronicles* offers the gameplay and visual style of the original in portable form.

Why we love it *Valkyria II* has less of a story focus and more turn-based/real-time strategy combat. There's a robust upgrade system with scads of classes, too.

Decorated for war The game takes place two years after the original game's conflict and many characters return for cameos, with some even playable in the squad. Sega fanboys can also decorate their tanks with stickers from other Sega franchises such as *Phantasy Star*, *Resonance of Fate*, and *Yakuza*.

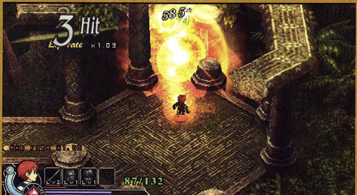
6 Ys: THE OATH IN FELGHANA

PUB **XSEED** DEV **NIHON FALCOM** ON **UMD, PSN**

What is it? A remake of the third *Ys* game that marks a shift from 2D side-scrolling adventure to a speedy 3D RPG.

Why we love it The game blends action-combat and platforming. It offers some intense boss fights that will challenge even the most experienced gamers.

Ease into Ys XSEED has two other *Ys* games available on PSP. Gamers interested in seeing how the series began can grab *Ys I & II Chronicles*. For those seeking something more modern, *Ys Seven* is the series' newest entry and was designed specifically for the PSP.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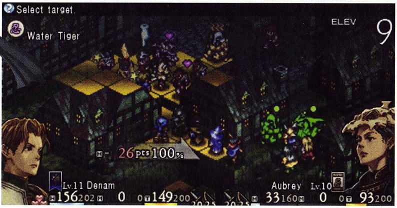

Select target.
Water Tiger
ELEV
9
26 pts 100%
Lv.11 Denam
156 202 0 149 200
Aubrey Lv.10
33 160 0 93 200

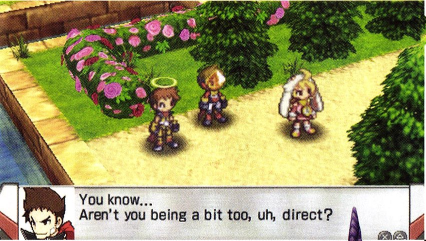
7 TACTICS OGRE: LET US CLING TOGETHER

PUB **SQUARE ENIX** DEV **SQUARE ENIX** ON **UMD, PSN**

What is it? This predecessor to *Final Fantasy Tactics* was developed by Quest in 1995 and has been remade for the PSP.

Why we love it It's arguably the most influential tactical RPG of all time, and the PSP release improves on the masterpiece by touching up the leveling system and allowing players to rewind battles. *Tactics Ogre* offers many branching points in its plot and this version allows for returning to these points in order to take an alternate path to experience the entire story.

Questing onward After the original *Tactics Ogre* wrapped in 1995, lead designer Yasumi Matsuno left developer Quest to join Square where he and other key members of his team worked on *Final Fantasy Tactics*, *Vagrant Story*, and *Final Fantasy XII*.



You know...
Aren't you being a bit too, uh, direct?

8 Z.H.P.: UNLOSING RANGER VS. DARKDEATH EVILMAN

PUB **NIS AMERICA** DEV **NIPPON ICHI SOFTWARE** ON **UMD, PSN**

What is it? A "roguelike" experience (turn-based action in randomly generated dungeons) for those who want humor in their hardcore RPG.

Why we love it From the *Disgaea* team, *Z.H.P.* blends humor, quirky characters, and neat customization systems into something more forgiving than most roguelikes.

Penguin head Part of the crazy customization includes the Unlosing Ranger having tank treads for legs, a Prinny hat for a head, and drills for arms. There are also costumes of favorite Nippon Ichi characters hidden within the game.

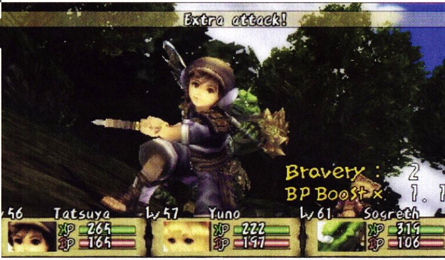
9 BRAVE STORY: NEW TRAVELER

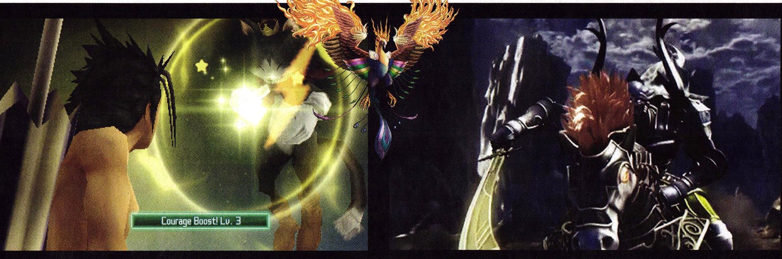
PUB **XSEED** DEV **GAME REPUBLIC** ON **UMD, PSN**

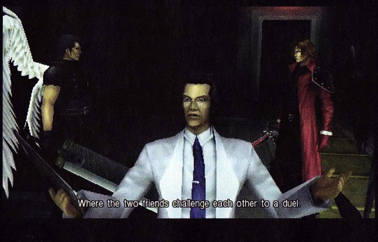
What is it? This might look like a cookie-cutter RPG, but it takes all of the traditions of Japanese RPGs and refines them. *Brave Story* tells a heartwarming story and boasts some unique combat innovations.

Why we love it Characters can level up and even learn new skills in the middle of combat. Along with the game's almost non-existent load times, *Brave Story* offers a seamless, traditional RPG experience for role-players of all ages.

Genji giggles The game was developed by the team that brought us *Genji: Days of the Blade* on PS3. Those who remember Genji's E3 2006 demo should get a laugh from one of *Brave Story's* early bosses.







Where the two friends challenge each other to a duel.

10 CRISIS CORE: FINAL FANTASY VII

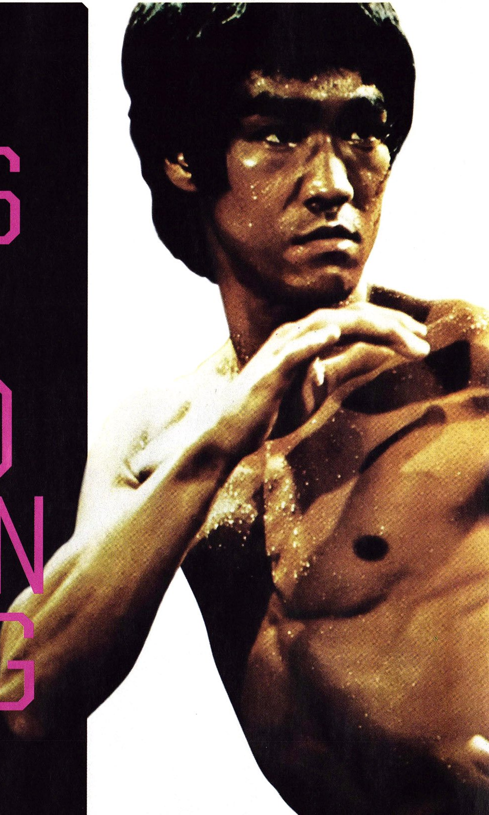
PUB **SQUARE ENIX** DEV **SQUARE ENIX** ON **UMD**

What is it? A prequel to *Final Fantasy VII* that follows the story of Cloud's hero Zack Fair, while attempting to clarify *FFVII's* plot.

Why we love it Zack is so cool that even Cloud wanted to be him, so we jumped at the opportunity to play as the charismatic, spiky-haired hero in an action-heavy RPG.

More *Core* Fans of *Crisis Core* have another PSP RPG to look forward to: *Final Fantasy Type-0* is being developed by members of *Crisis Core's* original team, including director Hajime Tabata, composer Takeharu Ishimoto, and character designer Tetsuya Nomura. This game looks similar to *Crisis Core*, but with a playable party.

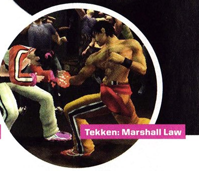
THE MOVIES THAT SHAPED MODERN GAMING



25 must-watch Blu-ray films, chosen in order of influence

For all the hoo-hah about games being bigger than Hollywood (they're not... yet), there's no doubt that developers still look to the silver screen for inspiration. The fact is, without *Se7en* there's no *Heavy Rain*. No *Blade Runner* means no *Deus Ex*. Without *The Fast and The Furious*, we'd never have played *Juiced*. (Which might have been, perhaps, a good thing.) And two years from now, we'll be playing games that steal from *Inception*. Here we identify the 25 movies (currently available on Blu-ray, of course) that have cast the biggest shadow over PlayStation gaming.

Street Fighter: Fei Long

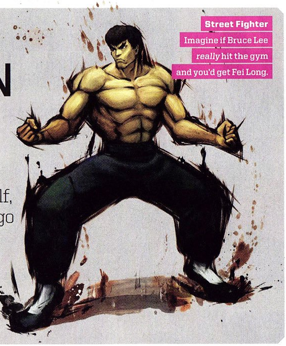


Tekken: Marshall Law

25 ENTER THE DRAGON

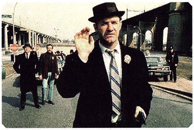
Influenced >> Street Fighter, Tekken

It's no surprise the most influential ass-kicker of all time captured the imagination of beat-'em-up designers. In *Street Fighter's* Fei Long (a movie star turned tournament fighter) and *Tekken's* Marshall Law, Bruce Lee all but appears as himself, with both characters pushing their likeness as far as they can go without getting a knock on the door from the lawyers. Even *Virtua Fighter* has Jacky Bryant, who doesn't look like Lee, but does use his Jeet Kune Do fighting style. Actually, a decent game about Bruce Lee might be a good idea—although we're hardly sold on the mysterious death ending.



Street Fighter
Imagine if Bruce Lee *really* hit the gym and you'd get Fei Long.

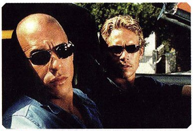
Enter the Dragon
Bruce strikes the pose that would appear on a million student walls.



24 THE FRENCH CONNECTION

Influenced >> Driver, Burnout, Grand Theft Auto IV, Split/Second

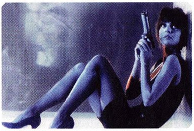
Drive by the Broker docks in one of *GTA IV's* Esperantos at sunset, and it's recreating the most famous scene in *The French Connection*. The film's about imperfect cops, and aside from the grainy New York City visuals, what's passed most clearly into gaming grammar is the messy rush of its seminal car chase, a dash through crowded streets—all near-misses and ricochets.



23 THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS

Influenced >> Need For Speed, Midnight Club, Juiced, Burnout

Sadly, *The Fast and The Furious* hasn't led to a succession of action games featuring Michelle Rodriguez bouncing around in vest tops. But every other aspect of Vin Diesel's vehicle has been rinsed and recycled by driving games over the last decade: the eye-burning neons of the early *Need For Speeds*, the unfathomable speed of every *Midnight Club*, the laughable attempt to inject tuner culture into *Juiced*.



22 NIKITA

Influenced >> Hitman, Metal Gear Solid, Heavenly Sword

It's safe to say that IO Interactive has never quite got over seeing Luc Besson's permafrost-cool thriller, in which a French gal on death row gets turned into a government-sponsored assassin. Whatever the Danish is for "make it a bald dude and we've got ourselves a game" led to the birth of the *Hitman* series. For proof listen to Jesper Kyd's brilliantly modern and menacing soundalike score.

21 BULLIT

Influenced >> Driver, GTA, Stuntman

No *Bullit*, no *Driver*. That might not sound like such a big deal now, but the original game's drift-heavy, cinematic take on car chases was a revelation at the time, and ultimately paved the way for *Grand Theft Auto III* and the evolution of the car genre from arcade racers and serious sims into plot-based action titles with characters and stories. The film's cool tone, soundtrack, and San Francisco setting have also flavored countless games since.

Mafia II Just don't tell him that he's funny.

20 GOODFELLAS

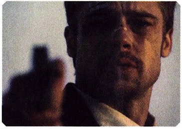
Influenced >> Mafia II, Saints Row

If *Mafia II* was any more in hock to *Goodfellas,* a local goon would have repossessed its pin-stripe suits and kicked its greasy head in. But it's not just Henry Hill—*sorry,* Vito Scaletta's—journey from aspiring low-life to criminal high-roller that's borrowed from Scorsese's epic. Every *GTA*, plus its trashy cousin *Saints Row*, casts us as a low-level hood looking to make it big. Plus the period detailing and eclectic cast of Mafioso characters inevitably comes across as yet more tips of the Fedora to one of the genre's big-screen gangster greats.

19 THE THING

Influenced >> Dead Space, Resident Evil

Any time we've fought a mess of cracking bones, eyeballs on stalks, and thrashing tentacles we have director John Carpenter's extremely creepy Antarctic-bound alien to thank. *The Thing's* influence is everywhere—from *Resident Evil's* morphing bio-weapons to the twitchy necromorphs of *Dead Space*—and the snowy setting also influenced *Metal Gear Solid*. It's a terrible shame Kurt Russell's beard hasn't been used more, though. Except for perhaps in the first-person shooter *Medal of Honor*.



18 SE7EN

Influenced >> Heavy Rain, Condemned 2

Heavy Rain often plays like *Se7en: The Videogame*. Not only were we embroiled in the mind games of a sadistic psychopath, but the detective scenes focused on analyzing clues to piece together the answers (see also: *Condemned*). Most thriller games strive to emulate the gripping narrative, and when it comes to the aesthetics and atmosphere, we won't find a more important source than David Fincher's masterpiece. That sense of gloom? The building pressure and sense of dread? Rain? *Heavy rain*? It all started here.

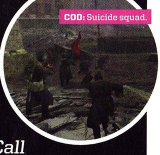
Enemy At The Gates Jude Law and Russian chums spot the golden arches in Russia.

© REX FEATURES

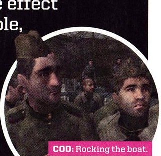
17 ENEMY AT THE GATES

Influenced >> Medal of Honor, Call of Duty

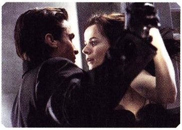
This neglected Soviet WWII sniper flick has its muddy footprints all over first-person shooters. Almost every series has picked over its scenes, but *Call of Duty* managed to copy the Stalingrad attack almost shot-for-shot twice. The effect on sniping mechanics is also undeniable, and no better encapsulated than by *World at War's* near replication of the standout scene: two Russian soldiers faking death among corpses while picking off Nazis.



COD: Suicide squad.



COD: Rocking the boat.



16 EQUILIBRIUM

Influenced >> Mirror's Edge, Batman: Arkham Asylum, Wet

Admittedly the film is all style over substance, but that (more than a bit fascistic) style clearly struck a chord with the dev crowd. Pretty much any third-person game that mixes up melee attacks with gunshots lifts from *Equilibrium*, and Batman's bone-cracking combos definitely have the same sense of brutal showmanship. The other big influence is the clean, minimal vision of a totalitarian future—which clearly had a big effect on the *Mirror's Edge* art team.

15 EVENT HORIZON

Influenced >> Dead Space, Mass Effect 2

With its seemingly deserted spaceship, zero-G gore, and occult flavor, this British space shocker has had a huge effect on games. That sense of paranoia and uncertainty felt exploring the abandoned rooms of *Dead Space* came straight out of *Event Horizon*. The problem in the film was torturous hallucinations and supernatural possession, rather than necromorphs, but the terrifying vibe is absolutely the same.

MOVIE ONE-OFFS

Tears of the Sun

In *Modern Warfare 2* Soap's mohawk, throat mic and outfit are an almost carbon copy of Kelly Lake's character in this modern African war flick.

The Third Man

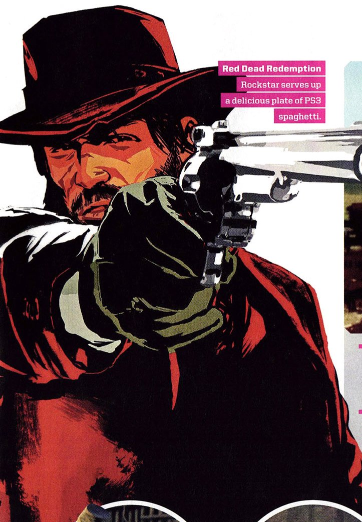
This old British film noir seems an unlikely source for Kojima's *MGS4* but a pursuit level in Europe borrows liberally from a classic scene.

The Descent

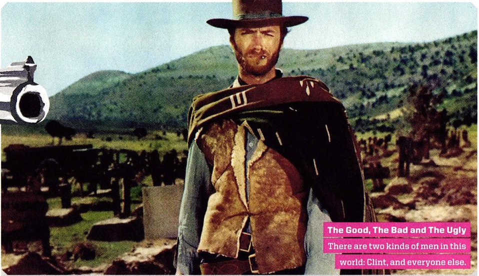
The connection between this underground horror flick and *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* is hard to miss: those icky wall-crawling monsters. Nasty.

Metropolis

BioShock chose its inspiration well when it wanted to introduce the undersea Rapture, mirroring this classic city-traversing shot.



Red Dead Redemption Rockstar serves up a delicious plate of PS3 spaghetti.



The Good, The Bad and The Ugly There are two kinds of men in this world: Clint, and everyone else.

© EVERETT COLLECTION/REX FEATURES

14 THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Influenced >> Red Dead Redemption, Call of Juarez, Gun

Rather than look to the hokey Hollywood myths about the frontier, game developers have taken their inspiration from the raw edge and loose ethics of Europe's stylish, violent, low-budget Spaghetti Westerns. Of which, Sergio Leone's *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* is the biggest touchstone. The key elements are Ennio Morricone's sparse, innovative score (which is paid such meticulous tribute in *Red Dead Redemption*), Eastwood's grumpy, nameless killer and the classic Mexican stand-off mechanic.

Call of Juarez: Uncivil war.

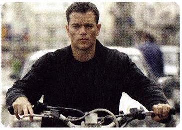
Gun: Gave good horse.

Vanquish: Mixes manga with the mobile infantry.

13 STARSHIP TROOPERS

Influenced >> Lost Planet 2, Vanquish

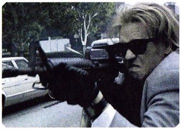
There aren't many developers with the skill to pull off Paul Verhoeven's pitch-black satire, but what plenty of games have managed to lift are the generically good-looking cannon fodder, lovely assault rifles, and endless waves of limb-slicing bugs. *Lost Planet 2* owes a huge debt in terms of creature design, not least when it comes to the massive monsters. It's proof also of how games affect films. Remember how Caspar Van Dien grenades a big bug's weak spot? Yeah, that was the boss battle.



12 THE BOURNE TRILOGY

Influenced >> Alpha Protocol, Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit, Batman: Arkham Asylum

Bourne not only gave a helping hand to the Bond franchise, but also tons of games. The brutal hand-to-hand combat of *Arkham Asylum* was very Bourne-esque with its reversals, while create-a-spy *Alpha Protocol* and its eponymous organization had a Treadstone vibe to it. A nod, also, to the trilogy's bombastic car chases, which the racing gurus at Criterion admit influenced the new *Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit*.

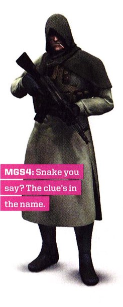


11 HEAT

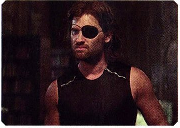
Influenced >> Kane & Lynch, GTA IV

The seductive efficiency of the heist crew in Michael Mann's masterpiece translates so directly to *Kane & Lynch: Dead Men* that it's a wonder Mann doesn't get a credit. The director's trademark moody blue visuals are also lifted more or less directly. The game's biggest homage comes in the shape of *Kane & Lynch's* doomed bank job, with *those* black hold-alls and *that* running street battle. They're not the only ones at it, either—check out the near-identikit Three-Leaf Clover mission in *GTA IV*.

GTA IV: On the Rob De Niro-style.



MGS4: Snake you say? The clue's in the name.



10 ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK

Influenced >> Batman: Arkham Asylum, Manhunt, Metal Gear Solid

Hideo Kojima's Solid Snake came from the ultimate anti-hero, Snake Plissken. John Carpenter's iconic creation, played to narcissistic perfection by the gravel-larynxed Kurt Russell, laid down all the hallmarks for the grumpy action hero. Rocksteady would later take note of the claustrophobic atmosphere and the battle to instill order when developing *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, while *Manhunt's* murderous streets took their cue from *Escape's* city-as-hell setup.

09 HARD BOILED

Influenced >> Stranglehold, Max Payne

It's cheating to list *Stranglehold* as a game influenced by *Hard Boiled*, given it's a continuation of Chow Yun-Fat's Inspector "Tequila" Yuen's adventures. By which we mean "jumping around firing two guns at once with the optional addition of doves." John Woo established the slo-mo gunplay influencing a thousand syrupy firefights since. Without *Hard Boiled* there would be no *Matrix* bullet-time and therefore no *Max Payne*, either.

08 THE TERMINATOR

Influenced >> Resident Evil 3, Enslaved: Odyssey to the West, Bulletstorm

Arnold's unstoppable Skynet killing machine is the archetype for invincible villains in games. Check out *Resident Evil 3's* Nemesis for the best example, right down to its sauntering walk, which says "I've got all the time in the world," probably because their appearance is heralded as the end of the world. Post-apocalypse environments full of machinery gone awry are a common theme on PlayStation, as most recently seen in *Enslaved*.

Resident Evil 3: Nemesis Essentially a smellier Terminator.

TV SHOWS

Generation Kill

This exceptional show has changed the presentation and dialogue of war games for ever. It's a huge inspiration.

Star Trek

From its vision of space travel, to its weapons and alien creations, this show has shaped the world of games immeasurably.

24

The splitscreen storytelling technique and shadowy world of brutal espionage has been a huge influence on games.

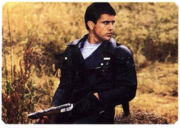
Band of Brothers

This emotional and raw tale of World War II is an unmistakable template for shooters.

07 CLASH OF THE TITANS

Influenced >> God of War, Dante's Inferno, Conan, Spartan: Total Warrior

Clash of the Titans (the original, aka the good one) tells the story of Perseus with stop-motion animation, giant monsters, and a mechanical owl, setting the standard for the whole myths and legends genre long before computer-generated imagery: Go big, go brutal, and make sure all the ladies wear semi-transparent dresses. Tear open the brains of the developers of *God of War, Conan*, or even *Spartan: Total Warrior* and expect to see climactic scenes like the battle with Medusa seared into the gray mush.



06 MAD MAX

Influenced >> Rage, Fallout 3, Twisted Metal, Fuel

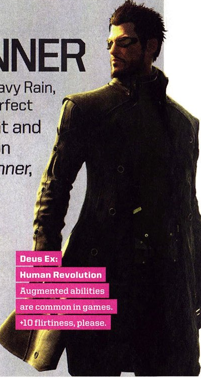
As one of the first film series to really nail the post-apocalyptic craphole genre, *Mad Max* set all the rules—rules that still endure because they make sense. With mankind's development ground to a halt, weapons and vehicles will be recycled. In the absence of military armorers, sports equipment is the next best thing. And deserts? They're just easy to render, both in celluloid or using polygons. Without *Mad Max's* brutal dystopia the likes of *Borderlands*, *Fallout*, and *Rage* would never have existed.

Blade Runner: Harrison Ford as future detective Deckard fails to nail the double jump.

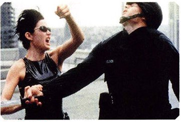
05 BLADE RUNNER

Influenced >> Deus Ex: Human Revolution, Heavy Rain, Snatcher, Fear Effect, TimeSplitters: Future Perfect

In games, the future isn't so much bright and orange as it is bleak and rainy. That vision can be traced directly back to *Blade Runner*, which started the sci-fi obsession with existential doubt, neon signage, and trenchcoats. Games like *Deus Ex* and Hideo Kojima's *Snatcher* took the iconography and themes and ran with them. Even *Heavy Rain*, with its contemporary setting, riffs on *Blade Runner*: cyber detective scenes, origami clues, and endless downpours.



Deus Ex: Human Revolution Augmented abilities are common in games. +10 flirtiness, please.



04 THE MATRIX

Influenced >> Max Payne, Enslaved: Odyssey to the West, Assassin's Creed

The Wachowski brothers' quasi-philosophical actioner was so cool its influence oozed into all aspects of popular culture. Slide-out phones, full-length leather jackets, even Morpheus' stupid clip-on sunglasses. And games took note too. The most immediate and obvious homage was the use of bullet-time, first appearing in 2001's noir-shooter *Max Payne*. But the acrobatic combat, leaps of faith, and mind/body separation stuff have had a bigger impact since. Ezio is *so* the new Neo.

03 SAVING PRIVATE RYAN

Influenced >> Medal of Honor, Call of Duty, Brothers In Arms, Sniper Elite

The opening of Spielberg's instant World War II classic rewrote all the rules for showing war on the big screen. *Saving Private Ryan* rubbed our faces in a messy, savage, and often limbless nightmare of shrapnel and noise. Fizzing bullets, random headshots, desaturated color, and sudden, shocking sensory deprivation were the brutal stylistic cornerstones that swiftly became industry standards for first-person shooters. It's kind of missing the point, perhaps, but inarguably making games that much more visceral.

02 DAWN OF THE DEAD

Influenced >> Resident Evil, Dead Rising 2, Metal Gear Solid

Zombies weren't always the amusing, ready-to-mulch idiots we love today. But when George Romero made his sequel to the none-more-bleak *Night of the Living Dead*, he chose a concept he could have fun with. The undead and a large mall? Cue gory consumer satire, and a shedload of potential weapons. Thus, the zombie as darkly comedic punchbag was born. *Dead Rising* lifted the premise wholesale, and despite its tension, *Resident Evil* has always reveled in blocky splattercore.

Aliens: The creatures, characters, and tech have all been stolen blatantly by game developers.

01 ALIENS

Influenced >> Call of Duty: Modern Warfare, Killzone 2, Dead Space

In re-routing the *Alien* franchise from tense terror to muscular war movie, James Cameron invented a killer new aesthetic: Vietnam in space. A future filled with worn tech and hardassed dialogue that's influenced games like nothing else—*Dead Space's* industrialized future, its use of corridors, lights and air vents, owes everything to *Aliens*. The film's ragged, rugged space marines pop up in shooters from *Killzone* to *Vanquish*, while its raw iron one-liners are imitated and quoted directly by the likes of *Modern Warfare* ("We. Are. *Leaving!*"). It's partly timing—released in 1985, *Aliens* rocked the adolescent brains of today's leading developers—but credit Cameron's invention, too, and salute him every time we fire a pulse rifle rip-off.

Lost Planet 2: Mech suits.

TimeSplitters 2: Pulse rifles

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Korean Dictator Reported Dead
Atomic Testing After Korean
Wake
Death

PlayStation
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Reviews

Your essential guide to new releases

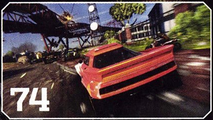
Can a videogame be a protest song? Can it capture the complex and often conflicting array of emotions experienced by people living through a time of war? Can it serve as the voice of a generation in the same way as songs like "Fortunate Son" or films like *Apocalypse Now*?

Either way, games are inarguably beginning to portray war in increasingly nuanced, controversial, and culturally relevant ways. Just look at *Homefront*, a game that supposes a full-scale invasion of the United States by North Korea. With unflinching portrayals of violence against civilians, it seems almost intentionally provocative.

Of course, that's just *some* games. Thankfully, titles like *Crysis 2* are here to provide us with plenty of good ol' alien blasting and over-the-top action—a far less realistic, yet gritty take on war.

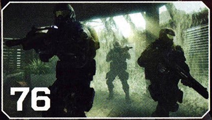
And then there's arcadey racer *MotorStorm: Apocalypse* and the stellar almost sim-like *Shift 2: Unleashed*, both of which get our motors running without so much as a frag grenade (though a few collapsing buildings certainly help).

Throw in a few sports titles, casual games, and charming downloadables, and all of sudden we're asking: What war?



MOTORSTORM: APOCALYPSE

What the Bruckheimer?! Someone got their *Split/Second* in our *MotorStorm*! And frankly, we couldn't be happier.



CRYSIS 2

Talk about being dressed to kill. The Nanosuit 2.0 empowers players with all manner of combat abilities, but will its batteries run out before the final battle?

HOMEFRONT

The campaign may be painfully short, but its terrifying glimpse into life in an occupied U.S. will stick with us forever—or at least until *Homefront 2* comes out.

How we score our reviews...

10 Awesome
Instant classic that's nearly PlayStation perfection.

9 Excellent
Highly recommended and a great investment.

8 Great
Wonderful yet still possesses minor flaws.

7 Good
Enjoyable but with definite room for improvement.

6 Acceptable
A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Mediocre
A game that's both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Flawed
Too flawed to be anything more than a curiosity.

3 Poor
A seriously defective game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful
A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it like the plague.

1 Raw Sewage
Apparently, feces *can* be pressed on a disc.

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
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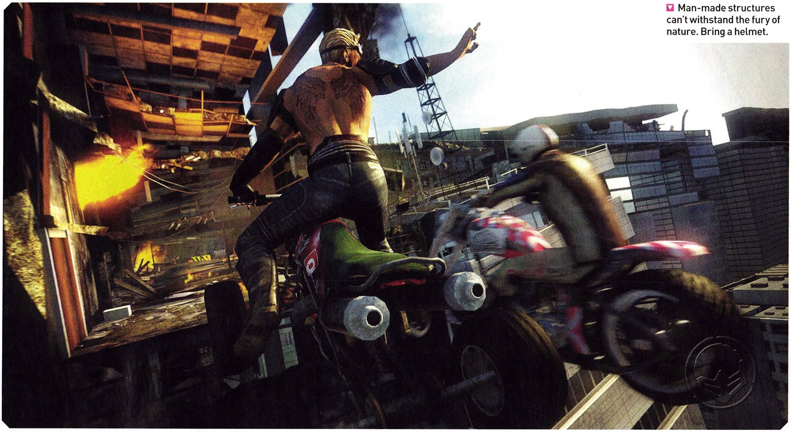
Our Highest Accolade
The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics, and profound appeal.



Man-made structures can't withstand the fury of nature. Bring a helmet.

MotorStorm Apocalypse

As if traffic and gas prices weren't apocalyptic enough

Info

PS3
MotorStorm Apocalypse
3D

Format PS3
Pub SCEA
Dev Evolution Studios
Price $59.99
ESRB Teen
It's like rocketing down the highway to hell at 150 mph.

After dragging us through dirt, mud, sand, and surf in *MotorStorm* and *MotorStorm: Pacific Rift*, the over-the-top, off-road racer has unexpectedly hit the blacktop for its third console outing. But the "roads" in *MotorStorm: Apocalypse* aren't like anything we've ever seen—at least not outside of a Hollywood disaster film.

Apocalypse's adrenaline-junkies have traveled to a San Francisco-inspired city in the grips of a metropolis-consuming earthquake. When the fate-tempting competitors arrive, the fictional city's being torn a new one by Mother Nature: skyscrapers are crumbling, tunnels imploding, highways buckling, and bridges collapsing. But these events aren't window-dressing. Nope, these blockbuster moments are happening in real-time, usually right under our tires.

Raining Concrete

Whether traversing an underground subway system as it threatens to envelop us in crushing concrete or frantically crossing a bridge while its supports twist and snap, we were never left wondering how this one earned its subtitle.

In fact, let's skip the clichéd "edge-of-your-seat" descriptors and just say the unconscious determination with which we gripped the gas button left our index fingers sore after extended play sessions. *Apocalypse* packs more moment-to-moment thrills than most dedicated action games, and the unpredictable nature of its world-ending disaster ensures its tracks are drastically altered with each lap—memorization is made moot when the straightaway we cruised on lap one has become a gaping tarmac crater by lap two.

Unfortunately, *Apocalypse's* spectacle sometimes steals the spotlight from the actual racing. It occasionally comes off like a one-trick

Five Good Reasons To take Apocalypse's rides for a spin

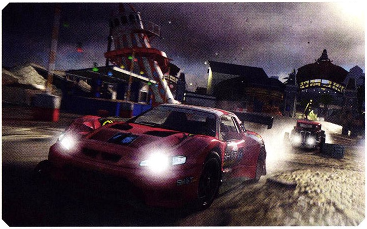
1 **HANDLING**
Rule the road on the badassest of bikes, the Chopper.

2 **SPEED**
They don't call superbikes crotch rockets for nothing.

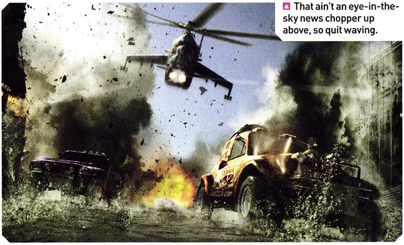
3 **STYLE**
Sexy supercars are the blacktop's beauties and beasts.

4 **DIVERSITY**
Superminis balance speed, handling, and toughness.

5 **ATTITUDE**
Dare competitors to mess with menacing muscle cars.

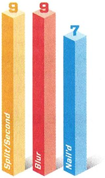


Carnivals are already nightmarish affairs. Toss in a natural disaster and some nutso drivers, and this state fair has gone from bad to...*totally awesome*!



That ain't an eye-in-the-sky news chopper up above, so quit waving.

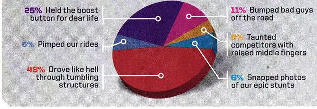
pony, albeit a pony with one really freakin' cool trick. The screen is so often consumed by clutter, debris, obstacles, and even heat-seeking rockets that keeping the air bags at bay becomes as important as winning the races. We spent as much time dodging debris as we did the aggressive A.I. opponents. Rocketing around on motorcycles while the world rapidly approaches its expiration date provides an undeniable rush, but the special effects-erupting approach can make *Apocalypse* feel more like a popcorn movie than a racing game.



ScorePole

MotorStorm: Apocalypse is neck-and-neck with PS3's best arcade racers.

What we did in... MotorStorm: Apocalypse



That's not to say *Apocalypse* relies solely on Bruckheimer moments. It generally retains the elements that made the previous entries such knuckle-whitening rides (i.e. arcadey handling, a scary-real sense of speed, stunning tech effects) while refining the formula. For starters, there's more focus on narrative. In the campaign-like Festival mode, players assume the role of three unique drivers, each representing a different level of difficulty. Motion comic cutscenes do little more than remind us how crazy the competitors are, but they're still a welcome addition to the previously story-starved series.

Faster, Faster!

Our fingers never strayed far from the boost button. *Apocalypse* continues to encourage boost abuse but adds a twist, allowing extra cooling while laying off the accelerator during jumps. It also builds on *Pacific Rift's* mechanic—where proximity to hot and cold objects heats or cools the nitrous, respectively. Rain, puddles, fire, and even rockets give the motors' thermometers a serious workout.

A standout example of this is the Skyline track (which earns its name by taking place atop the roofs of crumbling skyscrapers). Sticking to the toppling structures' rainy exteriors yields a cool engine, but a quicker route can be taken through the buildings' burning (i.e. engine-frying) interiors. Moments like these, when strategy collides with the city-leveling aesthetic, showcase *Apocalypse* at its pulse-pounding best.

Developer Evolution Studios has also tricked-out the franchise's multiplayer. Sixteen-player support and two to four-player splitscreen complement a robust offering of race-tweaking options and vehicle-pimping toys. The end-of-the-world excess is also toned down online, providing a purer competitive racing experience. Fans of traditional arcade racers will find more value in *Apocalypse*'s replay-rewarding multiplayer, but it's the campaign that'll have them instinctively gripping their Hyundai's steering wheel a little tighter every time they cross a rickety bridge. **MATT CABRAL**

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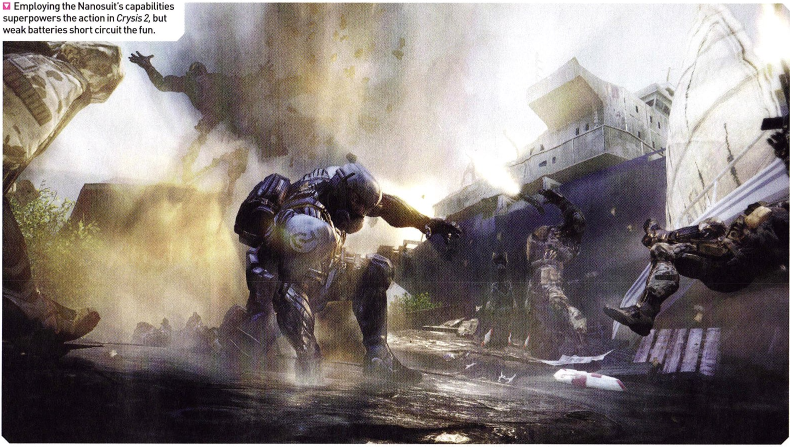
Employing the Nanosuit's capabilities superpowers the action in *Crysis 2*, but weak batteries short circuit the fun.



Crysis 2

Built to suit and shoot

Forget Alcatraz, *Crysis 2's* faceless protagonist. It's the Nanosuit 2.0 that comes with the entourage of extras—which is to be expected considering it's the real star in this visually dazzling first-person shooter.

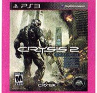
The Nanosuit enhances Alcatraz's speed, strength, and combat acuity, allowing an otherwise generic hero to singlehandedly demolish legions of alien Ceph invaders and a private army of human soldiers. Chief among the suit's capabilities are cloaking, temporary armor enhancement, the *Predator*-esque infrared Nanovision, and the Tactical Visor, which overlays objectives, waypoints, and attack options on the terrain. The suit also comes with a wealth of weapons customization options, which let us further optimize Alcatraz to fit our favored playstyle. In the mood for stealth? Upgrade the cloaking ability and equip the gun with a silencer. Craving a cover-oriented shootout? Try the Threat Tracker along with larger-capacity magazines.

It all looks cool and feels empowering in battle, but utilizing the Nano capabilities quickly drains the suit's batteries, making for vulnerable moments while we wait for the system to recharge. Yes, the energy-management element forces us to consider when to go full-Nano on enemies, but that became an unwelcome diversion: Instead of using our supersuit to kick ass, we were constantly distracted by turning Nano functions on and off. Upgrading the suit's power system alleviates the problem later in the game, but odd design decisions (like not being able to reload while the Tactical Visor is engaged, or having to manually deselect objective indicators even upon reaching them) kept us from feeling truly integrated with the "symbiotic" Nanosuit.

Apple of Our Eye

If the Nanosuit has a costar in *Crysis 2*, it's the Big Apple. A devastated New York City makes for iconic eye candy, and the game delivers a mostly top-tier first-person shooter experience. Unfortunately, paths through some of

Info



Format PS3
Pub Electronic Arts
Dev Crytek
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like the pretty one without much personality.

Armed and Dangerous Five favorite Crysis 2 weapons

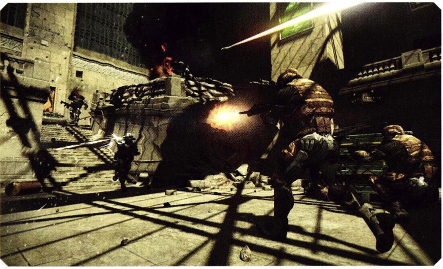
Feline SMG with fast fire rate and 80-round magazine

M2014 Gauss Armor-penetrating sniper rifle

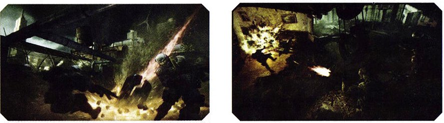
MIKE Microwave emitter cooks from the inside

JAW Laser-guided noob-tube missile launcher

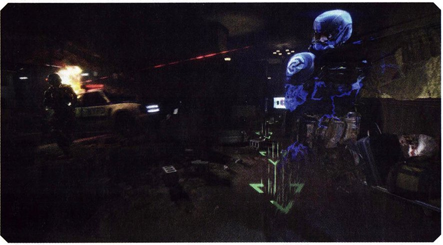
HMG High damage, good range and accuracy



▲ *Crysis 2* offers a generous 12-hour campaign mode—longer on more difficult settings.



▼ Nanopowers add a wrinkle to multiplayer, but we often preferred to focus on good ol' shooting.



the more dimly lit debris-strewn levels weren't always readily discernible and the framerate suffered when we dove headlong into fierce firefights.

The urban combat is, on the whole, challenging even on easier settings and remains competitively on par with *Call of Duty: Black Ops'* modern warfare and *Killzone 3's* sci-fi shooting. However, visible A.I. lapses like enemies getting hung up on environmental crags and overhangs, and even being oblivious to our non-cloaked presence at times, indicate the game's execution falls short of its genre-leading rivals. Multiplayer—with 12 maps and six Nano-infused twists on deathmatch, hold, and retrieval modes—eliminates the A.I. issues, but the experience never elevates beyond the familiar.

It's a motif that permeates *Crysis 2*: everything functions agreeably but nothing engages exceptionally. The game comes equipped with everything expected of a current-gen FPS, but the focus on suit attributes rather than human attributes lends a soulless air to the proceedings. We wouldn't hesitate recommending a visit to *Crysis 2's* Big Apple, but those seeking some character with their first-person combat should maintain their residency in *Black Ops* or on Helghan. **ROGER BURCHILL**

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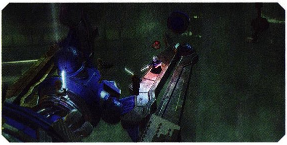

LEGO Star Wars III
The Clone Wars

Wars not make one great

Info

PS3
LEGO
STAR WARS III

Format PS3
Pub LucasArts
Dev Traveller's Tales
Price $49.99
ESRB Everyone
It's like a beloved guest who's on the verge of outstaying his welcome.

By now most people are familiar with the *LEGO* formula: classic stories told with a kid-friendly twist and wrapped in an action-platformer candy coating. This time the animated *Clone Wars* series gets the *LEGO* treatment, so each level revolves around select episodes from the first two seasons.

The charming beat-'em-up mechanics from *Clone Wars'* predecessors remain mostly unchanged, but a couple of fresh features—such as the Jedi power to maneuver enemy droids—have been added. The new mechanics add a modicum of depth for more experienced gamers, though it's still easy enough for kids to get through on their own. The new moves came in handy when solving certain puzzles but weren't necessary to complete the game.

Unfortunately, the concept is starting to become overly familiar. Solving puzzles still feels rewarding, but the brainteasers are achingly similar to those we've seen in previous titles. Updated graphics and a few new moves aren't enough to keep the experience from feeling like déjà vu. That said, *Clone Wars* remains a finely crafted and worthy romp through LEGO land, even for veterans of the series. Puzzles, comedy, Jedi, LEGOs: for fans and newcomers, that equation still offers hope for the Republic. **ANNE LEWIS**

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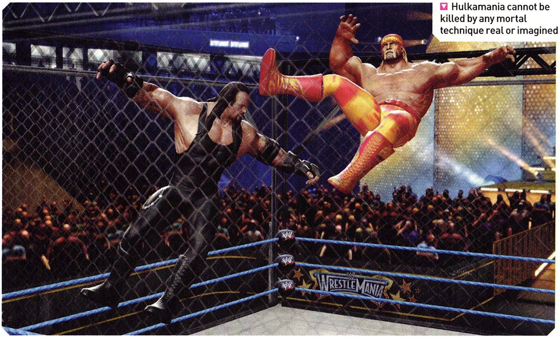
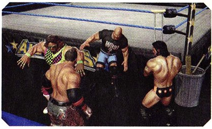
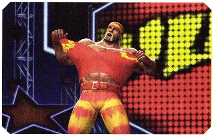


Hulkamania cannot be killed by any mortal technique real or imagined.



Tornado tag team matches involve four grapplers in the ring (or out of it) at once.



WWE All-Stars

The fault lies not in the stars

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** THQ
Dev THQ San Diego
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Teen
It's like when Harry hit Sally with a steel chair.

Barrel-chested and disproportionate to the point of being alternately comical and unsettling, *WWE All-Stars'* mat technicians are the videogame equivalent of the common Barbie: hyperbolic and overinflated. Wrestling has always been over-the-top; here it is absurd. Freakishly absurd.

Absurd works. *All-Stars* combines elements of fighting and wrestling games for a hybrid that kicks like in-game announcer Jim Ross' fabled government mule. A complement of World Wrestling Entertainment's most colorful wrestlers past and present bolsters the package, and a slick presentation hammers home the game's fast-and-furious action.

Powerful moves are heralded with colored speed lines, background shifts to black-and-white, and ripple effects when bodies are introduced—with great force—to the canvas. Each superpowered attack also involves flips, spins, and slow motion to highlight the assaulted party's agony. Charged strikes rocket our sucker foes into the air where they can be juggled. Our counters can be countered, which, in turn, we're able to counter-counter, and so on in the manner of a comedy act. *All-Stars'* wrestling is akin to the circus, if the circus happened to have a tragic encounter with many tons of dynamite primed to explode.

A nice balance exists among the wrestlers, and this helps push the game beyond the rabble. THQ divides them up into grappler, acrobat, brawler, and big man, and there's enough differentiation between the classes to matter: big men lumber about the ring while acrobats soar across it. Effort has been put into ensuring each wrestler type has an advantage over another, and the game makes it plausible for, say, diminutive masked hero Rey Mysterio to exploit Andre the Giant's weak spots.

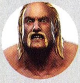
As a first entry in what may become a regular series, *All-Stars* lacks the breadth and depth of its stodgier wrestling simulator forebears. There are only three single-player storylines, none of which has much of a story to speak of. Instead, the game presents a series of 10 matches for us to run through with only a few brief cutscenes to tie things together. Fantasy matches pitting modern wrestlers against classic ones are introduced with amazing video montages and dramatic narration, but they're just one-off contests easily beaten and quickly forgotten.

We may forgive *All-Stars* for being thin on the ground for its debut, but the game also features a context-sensitive button that oftentimes gets the context wrong, causing our combatant to slip out of the wrestling ring, for example, when he should be making a pin attempt. The camera, too, seems ill equipped to handle the rigors of four-man combat, especially when pairs are fighting inside and outside the ring simultaneously. Even fearsome steel cage matches are neutered by a pointless, timing-based minigame we must complete in order for our grappler to escape from the unyielding metal construction. It's a bit of wrestling game convention *All-Stars* should have eschewed.

Make no mistake: These stars shine, but not as brightly as we might have hoped. **GREG ORLANDO**

Wrestlers

THE HULK



Hulk Hogan
The blonde Mega Power and proprietor of mania

THE MADNESS

Randy Savage
Mega Power partner and Slim Jim hawker

THE NUTJOB

The Ultimate Warrior
The Ultimate Warrior speaks of destructivity. Don't ask.

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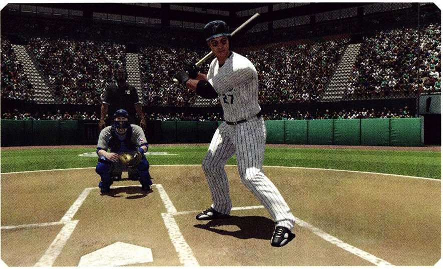


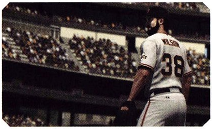
Major League Baseball 2K11

Not quite All-Star material

Info
Format PS3 **Pub** 2K Sports **Dev** Visual Concepts **Price** $59.99 **ESRB** Everyone **It's like** attending a Triple-A ballgame when the pro club is playing just down the street.

Competing with Sony's *MLB: The Show* these days is like taking on Tim Lincecum: contenders had better bring their A game. Unfortunately for 2K Sports, *Major League Baseball 2K11* just isn't up to the challenge. It's not a bad effort by any means, but *The Show* simply outpaces it in almost every meaningful way.

Perhaps the biggest disparity is in the visuals. Sony's title boasts vastly superior player likenesses, lighting, and animation, as well as an overall presentation that feels a lot more like an actual television broadcast. *2K11* had too many moments that pulled us out of the illusion—from fielders that take an awkward pause between actions to the fact that Carl Pavano's in-game model looks more like a PTOM editor than it does the actual pitcher. The announcers are a bit shaky, as well. Gary Thorne acquits himself well enough, but John Kruk sounds bored and Steve Phillips—who may very well be the worst "analyst" in all of baseball—shouldn't be allowed anywhere near a microphone.



MLB 2K11 improved on every phase of the game since *2K10*, but *The Show* is a dynasty.

As with *The Show*, *2K11* has options for both full analog gameplay and traditional button controls. The analog hitting works quite well, and we love the ability to quickly flick the control stick left or right for a defensive swing. We aren't as fond of the analog pitching, which involves inputting *Street Fighter*-esque motions for the different pitch types. It's a somewhat bizarre approach that doesn't feel as natural as *The Show's* system. At least the traditional button controls are still an available alternative.

One cool feature that 2K's game has over Sony's is a dynamic ratings system that updates a player's parameters based on his real-life performance during the season. Performances often diverge greatly from pre-season expectations (just look at Francisco Liriano last year), so it's great to have that reflected immediately rather than having to wait for new player ratings in next year's game. Our fellow stat geeks will also love touches like *2K11's* win probability graph that changes with every play.

2K11's got game, but *The Show* is deeper, prettier, and more fun. Why settle for pretty good when you can have truly exceptional? **ROBERT STEVENS**

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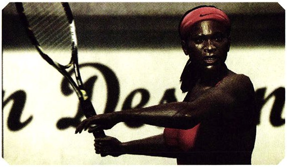
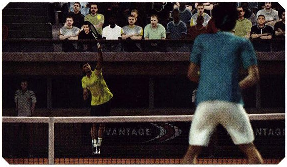
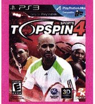


For a more arcadey experience, try using the Move controller.



Top Spin 4

It all started with Pong



Info
Format PS3
Pub 2K Sports
Dev 2K Czech
Price $59.99
ESRB Everyone
It's like just the right amount of spin on the ball.

Tennis games have always been a videogame staple, but *Top Spin 4* sets a new visual and gameplay standard for the sport. Gone is *Spin 3's* convoluted control system that seemed to require a planning commission proposal to return a volley. Flat, top spin, slice, and lob shots are now mapped to the DualShock's face buttons with coordinated stick and shoulder button inputs allowing further ball manipulation. Powering up for a return could occur at a faster clip (to add a dash more spontaneity), but gameplay otherwise finds the sweet spot between tactics and execution.

We appreciated the noticeable difference in play characteristics on the game's 40 hard, grass, clay, and carpet arenas, though the lineup of 25 contemporary stars and legends seems sparse. Where's McEnroe, Connors, et al.? But a comprehensive player creator does allow for a challenging climb up the ranks via offline Career mode or online matches.

The hole in *Spin 4's* serve is its lack of in-game commentary, which imparts an eerily quiet, last-gen feel to matches. It saps some life from the game, but tennis purists might appreciate the lack of chatter. **ROGER BURCHILL**

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For once, Americans don't need to travel far to get their war-fix on.

Homefront

One nation, divisible, under the gun

Info

PS3
HOMEFRONT
RP
THQ

Format PS3
Pub THQ
Dev Kaos Studios
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like our struggle to defend America, one Hooters at a time.

Thou shalt make us feel.

We play to be moved, regardless of whether we're seeking excitement, rage, fear, or even the satisfaction of a job well done. In this, *Homefront* succeeds magnificently. It's cunningly designed. It is manipulative and jingoistic.

Homefront makes us feel.

The first-person shooter cobbles up a chilling (if perhaps fantastical) tale of an occupied United States. A brutal reign has fallen across the West: As the game picks up, we are plucked from our apartment, beaten, and taken away to an uncertain fate.

Before we fire our first shot, we can see what a Korean occupation has wrought. Streets are shattered. Dead bodies are left lying in the gutters. A child wails in agony as his parents are shot in front of him. Inside our prison bus, we hear of detention centers, forced labor camps, and mass graves.

The game builds to the battle of San Francisco, the first step in the country's liberation. Along the way, we're toted like so much baggage. We're a pilot, we learn—a tool to be used by a burgeoning American resistance. Because we don't know exactly who we are and because *Homefront* never gives us more than a name, we're left to focus on the grim situation and systematically made to despise the faceless, non-English-speaking enemy put before us.

E Pluribus Unum

Screenwriter John Milius (*Red Dawn* and *Conan the Barbarian*) knows exactly where to hit us. As a shooter, *Homefront* excels at making us feel weak, small, outgunned. We're constantly scraping for ammunition or having to pick up new weapons. Almost every battle requires us to sneak, to plan, to scheme to beat the Koreans because we simply can't win in a straight-up firefight. We're reminded time and time again of how we're the farm team up against major leaguers.

A brand-new America The history of Homefront

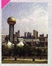
2013

Korea is united under dictator Kim Jong-un.

2017

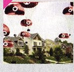
U.S. economy collapses, forcing our military forces' retreat from Asia.

2022



"Knoxville Cough," a virulent flu strain, ravages America. Mexico closes its borders.

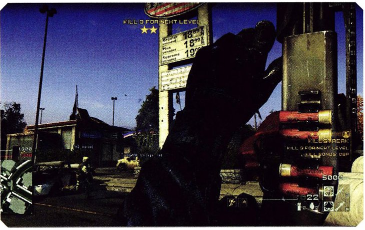
2025



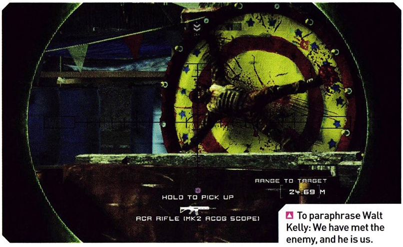
A Korean-led invasion of the U.S. begins.

2026

"Operation Water Snake" irradiates the Mississippi river.



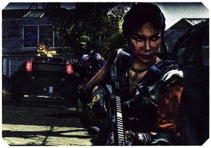
Ah, the shotgun. It's a staple of the first-person shooter and as fearsome a Korean penetrator as has ever been invented.



To paraphrase Walt Kelly: We have met the enemy, and he is us.

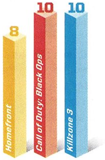
USE GRENADE LAUNCHER
90

The Koreans are digging mass graves for Americans. We get to hide in one of them.



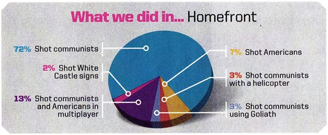
When we're finally given the tools to stick it to the enemy, we can react with a fierce and piercing rage. After the magnificent buildup—with *Homefront* doing its best to play us in the manner of a violin—how could we not revel in the moment when we rain down death from a helicopter or take out heavy vehicles with Goliath, a remote-controlled missile-firing behemoth?

Major assaults are serenaded by classics of Americana: Elvis Presley's "Burning Love" during a disastrous white phosphorous strike and The Chambers Brothers' cowbell- and guitar-laden protest song "Time Has Come Today" as helicopters rise across the San Francisco skyline to retake the city. "The rules have changed today," the Chambers note, and *Homefront* wants to ensure we get it. It's impossible, in fact, to miss.



ScorePole

Home is where the gunfire is, and *Homefront* does well in the face of entrenched competition.



Sponsored By...

The game never gets the hang of subtlety. Its earnest approach to storytelling serves to flesh out what's a stark play for our emotions, but the game overdoes its hammer blows. Blatant product placement is shamed by the *super-blatant* product placement in *Homefront*. Ads for White Castle (itself a Midwest and East Coast hamburger chain and largely out of place here), Hooters restaurants, and JanSport bags are predominant. The country is wrecked, but it's good to know the advertisers' storefront facades remain unblemished.

The solo campaign is a short, sharp affair. We're rocketed from battlefield to battlefield with little exposition to mess up the gunfire. When shooting Koreans wears thin, we're made to fight against American survivalists in order to steal a helicopter. If nothing else, the game is an equal opportunity offender: The survivalists are as bad as the occupying Koreans.

The game ends with a satisfying conclusion, but leaves us wanting more. We'll return to this world for sure, but for now all we have is a series of multiplayer modes lacking the single-player's emotional punch. Developer Kaos pads out the package in fine fashion, but there are other, sharper multiplayer experiences to be had. We came to *Homefront* for its front lines and its heart, and it's here the war is won.

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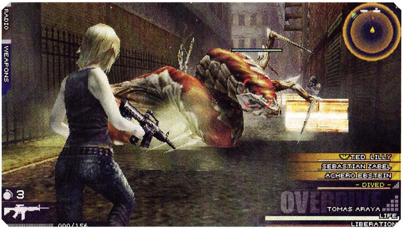
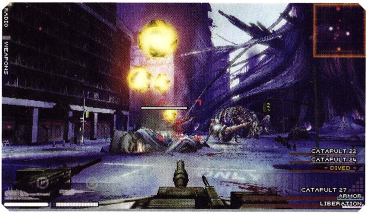
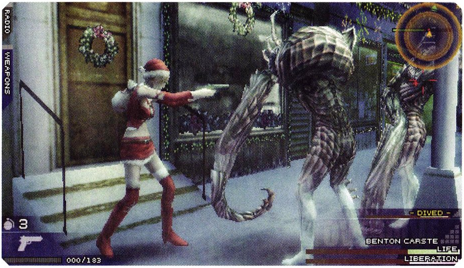
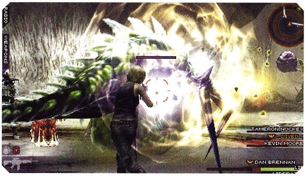
GREG ORLANDO





What's the meaning of life? According to *The 3rd Birthday*, it's a monster-blasting hottie in revealing outfits, of course. Now, don't you feel silly for asking?

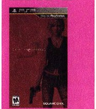




The 3rd Birthday

Cooler sounding than plain ol' Parasite Eve III

Info



Format PSP
Pub Square Enix
Dev Square Enix
Price $39.99
ESRB Mature
It's like *Uncharted* with way, way uglier bad guys.

There are a few questions *The 3rd Birthday* leaves unanswered. Questions such as, "What was going on through three-quarters of the plot?" and "Do any real human beings actually talk like that?" and even "How does Aya Brea's outfit manage to stay unshredded enough to dodge an Adults Only rating?" Maybe that last one answers itself. But the main point: this is not a shining example of tight, seamless, believable storytelling. *Birthday* is, however, a pretty cool 3D shooter on a system where games like this tend to go horribly wrong.

Lacking a second analog stick, the PSP has trouble with any game demanding manual camera control. Knowing this, the people who designed *Birthday* made sure we usually wouldn't need the function. Consider this a more scripted, set-piece-oriented take on cover-driven shooters like *Uncharted* or *Killzone*. The automatic aiming is smart and responsive, the level design avoids confusing open spaces, and the gunfights are carefully laid out to channel the player's attention in the right directions.

Moving around the battlefield quickly and getting a different perspective is usually easy enough—just steal a different body. Both *Birthday's* gameplay and story revolve around a widget called Overdive, which Aya uses to zap herself into the recent past by inhabiting other people's bodies. Any given scene usually has several characters to control or abandon with the tap of a button, depending on the tactical situation. It's especially handy, in a grim sort of way, to be able to dive for a new avatar when the old one's about to die.

There are also a few light RPG elements with the shoot-'em-up action—just enough to make us do some thinking. Aya gains new powers with experience, as well as a bigger and badder collection of customizable weaponry. The Over Energy system that develops her special skills isn't especially user-friendly, but it's easy to cook up interesting results after some tinkering.

The plot's secrets, when they're revealed at all, are given up in a backward fashion. We spend most of our time without a clear idea of what's going on, especially on our first trip through the game. It's fine to reserve the revelations for the exciting climax, and the story's short enough to make multiple playthroughs both easy and worthwhile, but there's also something to be said for giving us enough details so we don't become gripped with existential confusion: *Why am I here? What am I doing? What's the meaning of it all, anyway?*

Mostly, though, *Birthday* is about shooting the hell out of big gruesome monsters. This might be all the meaning most of us require. DAVID F. SMITH

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PixelJunk Shooter 2

Tough love gets tougher

Info

Format PSN
Pub SCEA **Dev** Q-Games
Price $9.99 **ESRB** Everyone
It's like manning a spaceship in a lava lamp.

We were fully enamored with *PixelJunk Shooter's* blend of shooting mechanics, puzzle solving, and subterranean exploration, so it's little surprise that the sequel hooked us just as strongly. *PixelJunk Shooter 2's* three fresh episodes explode with a similar kind of boundless energy and creativity, with each world offering a significantly different aesthetic.

After battling the gastrointestinal hazards of a giant beast at the beginning, the back end of the adventure plays with light and dark elements in a very distinct and meaningful way.

We just wish Q-Games hadn't focused so much of its enviable talents on punishing us with cheap deaths and brutal checkpoints, especially since the aggressive enemies and complicated challenges lead to much more time spent replaying stages and entire missions.

But instead of smashing our controller and abandoning the quest, we simply channeled our aggression toward the new online dogfights. One player attacks while the other rescues scientists—it's a simple approach that belies a seriously solid multiplayer experience, which rewards continued play with more intense power-ups and weaponry.

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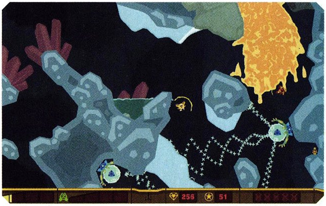
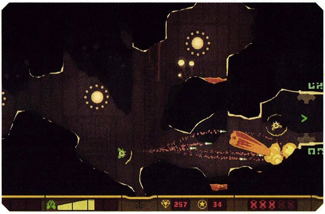
Though frustration can mount during the solo adventure, *Shooter 2* still offers up a ton of ingenuity and creative punch at a puny price. **ANDREW HAYWARD**

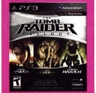


Shooter 2's massive boss creatures offer up multifaceted challenges.



The tomb raider is absolutely beautiful, and the game doesn't look half-bad either.

Info



Format PS3
Pub Square Enix/ Eidos **Dev** Crystal Dynamics
Price $39.99
ESRB Teen
It's like an old flame who's held up surprisingly well.

Tomb Raider Trilogy

Three times a lady

Gamers are a nostalgic bunch. We love reliving the adventures that established our love for gaming. For many, *Tomb Raider's* pistol-packed third-person action is a pillar in that foundation—a pillar we can climb up and do a back flip off.

With *The Tomb Raider Trilogy*, Eidos bundles three of archaeologist Lara Croft's most recent adventures onto one Blu-ray disc. *Tomb Raider: Legend* and *Tomb Raider: Anniversary* make their PS3 debuts with complete visual overhauls from their PS2 iterations. *Anniversary*, a remake of the original *Tomb Raider*, received the most attention, with revamped gameplay and controls bringing it more in line with the current generation. Neither game can truly stand toe-to-toe with more recent releases in the genre, but they've both aged fairly well. *Tomb Raider: Underworld*—which hit the PS3 in 2008—is also included; though it's a current-gen game, it's not as strong as *Legend*, the best game of the bundle.

The pack might not technically include much new content, but it gives fans of the series the strongest editions of the previously released games and serves as a stellar introduction for newcomers to the venerable and well-loved series. **HOLLANDER COOPER**

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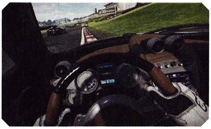
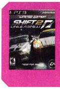
Shift 2 Unleashed

Racing sim brain meets arcade brawn



▲ *Unleashed* is one of the few racing games that we enjoy driving in cockpit view.



Info
Format PS3 **Pub** Electronic Arts
Dev Slightly Mad Studios
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Everyone 10+
It's like the cool science teacher that blew stuff up, but with cars.

It's easy to forget a racecar is essentially just someone strapped into a metal cage using explosions to create speed. Driving competitively is a deafening, physically punishing experience that tests body and mind. A lot of racing games—especially those striving for realism—have a hard time capturing this visceral feel. *Shift 2: Unleashed* does not.

Unleashed carries its predecessor's torch, blending the technical aspects of sim racing and tuning with the brutal reality of getting banged around on the track. The game's new helmet view works on both fronts, drawing us deeper into the belly of the beast while helpfully pulling our view toward the apex of each turn.

The career mode has an excellent sense of progression, allowing us to jump from event to event as we see fit. If we're tired of racing a trumped up econobox, we can jump in a borrowed Koenigsegg for a hot lap or give drifting a shot. *Unleashed* also implements *Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit*'s Autolog and Speed Wall features, which track lap times between friends and definitely up the competition factor.

We accumulate money and experience for virtually everything we do (including online races), so there's no shortage of cash to sling around. Even better, the game allows us to sell any upgrade for a full refund, encouraging liberal experimentation and tuning. A full suite of assist options allow us to adjust the realism to our liking, but in general the physics are great: cars feel stable without feeling static. Even better, the physics punish ramming and driving like an idiot, which should encourage everyone to keep it clean.

Unleashed does have a few shortcomings. In a genre that takes a lot of pride in photorealism, the graphics are a bit underwhelming. The lack of a flashback feature and the painfully realistic drifting might also scare away some players. The game's closest competition is Codemaster's *Grid*, but with *Grid* missing in action in favor of the rally-flavored *Dirt* series, asphalt fiends may have a new favorite. *Unleashed* has significantly improved on the original and found an almost perfect blend of arcade racing thrills and technical simulation challenge.

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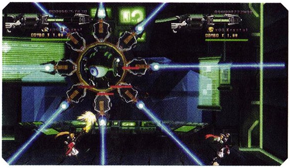
MICHAEL GRIMM



Hard Corps Uprising

Pretty but cruel, like an ex-girlfriend

Info
Format PSN
Pub Konami
Dev Arc System
Price $14.99
ESRB Teen
It's like the hardest part of every *Contra* game.

There is a boss battle in *Hard Corps: Uprising* that occurs during free fall, requiring us to leap between chunks of plummeting debris while the boss constantly destroys these tiny moving platforms. Such is the absurd difficulty the *Contra* series has reached. We don't mind a tough game, but *Uprising* pulls cheap tricks to frustrate even hardened *Contra* fans, and it seems obstinate in denying us the series' signature special weapons.

Still, the new anime look is bright and luscious, while the intense non-stop combat is furiously *Contra*. The weapons—both classic and new—are wonderful. Upgrades to gameplay include a double-jump and air dash, allowing for ultra-nimble bullet dodging. The truly masochistic can take on the impenetrable, classic-style Arcade mode while the rest of us work on earning experience and purchasing character upgrades in the war-of-attrition Rising mode. Cooperative play is of course available, but unless both players are whizzes at parsing extreme cacophonies of visual data, it just makes the game even more difficult. This is for the punishment-addicted only.

PlayStation The Official Magazine **7**

MATT KEAST

GUITAR WORLD LICK OF THE DAY

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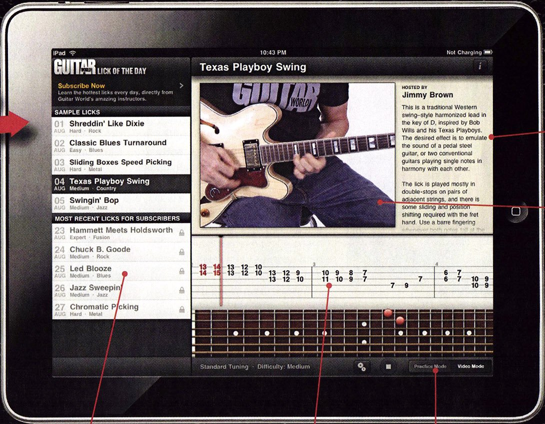
OPTIMIZED FOR iPAD! – use it on the iPhone and iPod touch, too!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Standard Tuning · Difficulty: Medium
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Video Mode

Learn the hottest licks every day, directly from Guitar World's amazing instructors.

SAMPLE LICKS

- 01 AUG Shreddin' Like Dixie – Hard · Rock
- 02 AUG Classic Blues Turnaround – Easy · Blues
- 03 AUG Sliding Boxes Speed Picking – Hard · Metal
- 04 AUG Texas Playboy Swing – Medium · Country
- 05 AUG Swingin' Bop – Medium · Jazz

MOST RECENT LICKS FOR SUBSCRIBERS

- 23 AUG Hammett Meets Holdsworth – Expert · Fusion
- 24 AUG Chuck B. Goode – Medium · Rock
- 25 AUG Led Blooze – Medium · Blues
- 26 AUG Jazz Sweepin – Medium · Jazz
- 27 AUG Chromatic Picking – Hard · Metal

Texas Playboy Swing

HOSTED BY
Jimmy Brown

This is a traditional Western swing-style harmonized lead in the key of D, inspired by Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys. The desired effect is to emulate the sound of a pedal steel guitar, or two conventional guitars playing single notes in harmony with each other.

The lick is played mostly in double-stops on pairs of adjacent strings, and there is some sliding and position shifting required with the fret hand. Use a barre fingering

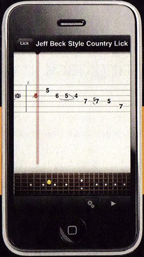
Performance notes written by GUITAR WORLD

High-quality video demonstrations with full-screen option!

Hundreds of licks in all styles – rock, metal, blues, country, jazz – with a new lick delivered every day

Standard and tab music notation for each lick that scrolls in sync with the video

Practice mode lets you control tempo, looping and metronome


Lick
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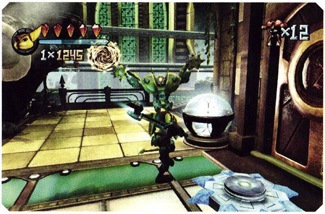
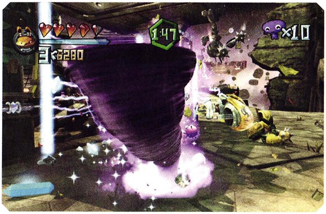


Heroes supports single-screen, partial couch co-op, granting a second Move-wielding gamer with some Player One-assisting abilities.



PlayStation Move Heroes

Sony's stars make their Move

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** SCEA
Dev Nihilistic Software
Price $39.99 **ESRB** Everyone 10+
It's like casually hanging out with our favorite PlayStation buddies.

Taking a cue from Nintendo's mascot-mixing minigame collections, *PlayStation Move Heroes* brings Sony's stars together for some accessible, arcadey fun. From behind the Move, we control Ratchet, Clank, Sly, Bentley, Jak, and Daxter through straightforward challenges such as collecting items, destroying targets, battling baddies, and retrieving alien babies. While the individual tasks are simple, completing them under the watch of a ticking clock proves addictive. Medals are awarded based on performance, and the quick-hit appeal of the games always kept us going for the gold.

Aside from moving the heroes with the navigation controller, all of the actions—whipping, tossing, shooting, melee-ing—are mapped to the wand. We faced a minor learning curve steering bowling balls and discs, but the rest of the controls worked as expected. Special abilities such as charging the whip by holding the Move at shoulder level helped inject some depth into the somewhat mindless arm-waving repertoire.

But the real star of *Heroes* are the heroes themselves. Sony's critters are a charming bunch, so hanging with all of them in one place is a can't-miss opportunity for fans of the classic franchises. Complemented by environments and enemies that'll be familiar to anyone who spent his youth in front of a PS2, *Heroes* is brimming with personality and style. It's no substitute for a dedicated title starring any one of its three duos, but it still packs plenty of fan-pleasing fun. **MATT CABRAL**

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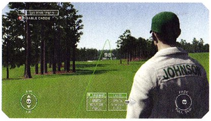

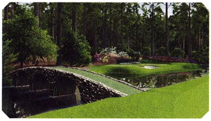

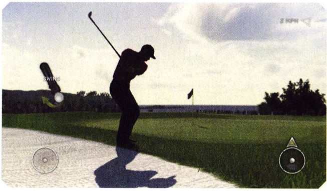

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12 The Masters

Getting back in the swing of things

Excluding the relegation of Tiger Woods' moniker to the very bottom of the box, there have been two major additions since *PGA Tour 11*. The first is the ability to play Augusta National, site of many of golf's most historic moments. It's a fun, challenging course showcasing the new lifelike 3D grass, which looks and behaves like, well, grass.

The second new feature is an automated caddie who, if we choose, will recommend clubs, shots, and approaches. This caddie usually doles out reasonable options, but occasionally glitches and provides poor guidance or worse—no advice at all.

Much like last year, we accumulate Focus points that we can spend to improve our aim or putting as we play, and after a match, we can use the points to improve our player as well. We could just stick to Play Now mode for no-pressure thrills, but we preferred to work our way through the Road to the Masters mode, which provides for some great, tense moments.

Move support is also here again, and wow, is it difficult. It's not quite real-golf hard, but it's close enough that it could serve as a great training aid. That said, it's surprisingly fun with friends, though we recommend activating the True Aim mode for best and more consistent results.

PGA Tour 12 doesn't redefine the golf experience, but its streamlined approach makes it simpler to enjoy a round on the links. **GEORGE JONES**

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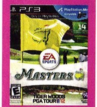
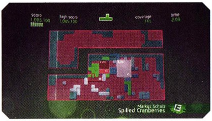
Info



Format PS3
Pub EA Sports
Dev EA Tiburon
Price $59.99
ESRB Everyone
It's like another enjoyable round on our favorite course.

Chime Super Deluxe

Format **PSN** Price **$4.99** ESRB **Everyone** Pub **Zoe Mode** Dev **Zoe Mode**



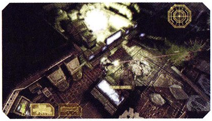
Any time a game consists of strategically placing blocks, it's tempting to say, "You know, like *Tetris*," and move on. *Chime Super Deluxe*, however, more closely resembles another block-based puzzler: *Lumines*. Players position pieces to create rectangles on a grid. Each completed rectangle fills the grid and builds a combo counter.

A "beatline" scans across the grid and triggers sound samples based on the location of all those pieces. The music has little impact on the gameplay, but it does create an oddly soothing atmosphere that belies the fast-paced and addictive mechanics. It's nothing revolutionary but still worth exploring for puzzle game fans. SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

PlayStation 7

Alien Breed 3 Descent

Format **PSN** Price **$9.99** ESRB **Teen** Pub **Team17 Software** Dev **Team17 Software**



The gruesome alien slaughter builds to a climactic finale in this last installment of the sci-fi horror trilogy. While there are ample hordes of nasty alien crawlies to blast as usual, we also appreciated dispatching megalomaniacal mecha-mutants, hoofing it through new third-person stretches, and testing out a few fun additions to the old arsenal. These minor extras are a nice touch, though the series' intense but slow-paced gameplay is starting to feel a little stale the third time around. Repetitiveness aside, the plot and the action both heat up enough to make it worth pushing through another round of bug stomping—at least one last time. NATHAN MEUNIER

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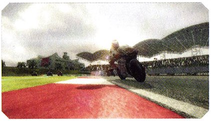
MotoGP 10/11

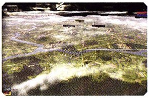
Format **PS3** Price **$39.99** ESRB **Everyone** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Monumental Games**



Fans were left with bad case of road rage after last year's *MotoGP*, leaving Monumental Games with a lot to prove. By tuning the controls and refining the visual and audio presentation significantly, this year's effort sees improvements to many problem areas. More importantly, the developers made the game more accessible to newcomers—with better driver assist for those uninterested in relearning how to ride a bike—and more challenging to *MotoGP* fans looking for a realistic simulation. The series still has a ways to go before anyone starts calling it the *Gran Turismo* of motorcycle racing, but it's definitely on the right track now. HOLLANDER COOPER

PlayStation 7

DLC Roundup



R.U.S.E. Pack of the Rising Sun

Price **$9.99** ESRB **Teen**

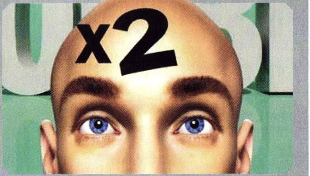
Bored with crushing opponents under the boots of the same old tired army? This expansion pack revitalizes *R.U.S.E.'s* WWII combat by opening up the Japanese army for use in all modes. With three exclusive campaign operations and 28 new units, it's time to get back to the front.

Lord of Arcana Pack 1

Price **Free** ESRB **Mature**

Dealing with meddlesome fairy knights and preventing woodland destruction is only a small portion of the tasks laid out in this free PSP game expansion. The pack features four fresh missions with new foes to carve up, lots of loot to grab, and new perils to overcome.

Download of the Month



You Don't Know Jack Jack Pack 1

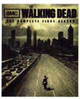
Price $4.99 **ESRB** Teen

Everyone's favorite bombastic '90s gaming quiz show is back with more zaniness than ever. For those who've already managed to exhaust the game's 70-plus episodes of trivia, this downloadable content pack offers 10 all-new episodes' worth of questions to challenge our craniums. See, mom? We told you that so-called frivolous knowledge would come in handy someday!

The Walking Dead

Brainy fare to satisfy our undead hunger

Info



Price $49.99
Creators Frank Darabont, Robert Kirkman
Starring Andrew Lincoln, Jon Bernthal, Sarah Wayne Callies, Laurie Holden, Steven Yeun
Rated Not Rated
Extras Behind-the-scenes featurettes.

The Walking Dead is incredible television brought to the small screen by Hollywood heavyweights Gale Anne Hurd and Frank Darabont. Hurd's credits include *The Terminator* and *Hulk* film series, while Darabont, best known for directing *The Green Mile* and *The Shawshank Redemption,* was particularly instrumental to bringing *Dead* to TV. His hands are all over the show, as writer, story developer, and even director.

It was a risky proposition to bring a serialized zombie comic book to the small screen, but the payoff is a tense, moody, engaging show with great characters and production values, and a pacing akin to a slow burn. The show tells the saga of small-town sheriff Rick Grimes, who wakes up from a coma to find the world he knew destroyed. Joining up with other survivors outside of Atlanta, Rick must struggle to lead the ragtag group to some semblance of safety. Unfortunately, in a world overrun by zombies, there's no such thing as safe.

The show manages to walk a fine line between maintaining hope for the survivors while never backing down on how dire the situation actually is. The focus is largely on intelligent dialogue and character development, but there's no shortage of horrific zombie gore and hordes of shambling undead. *The Walking Dead* isn't for the faint of heart. It's a violent, harsh show with a gritty sense of oppression.

The visuals are noticeably grainy—although that's likely a stylistic decision, not a flaw in the video—and the extras aren't as expansive as we'd like. There are no commentary tracks and the episode-specific behind-the-scenes videos are short and mostly consist of promotional material. A few of the featurettes are worth checking out, but there's little here that's as juicy as the series itself.

If there's a problem with *Dead*, it's that there isn't enough of it. The six-episode first season flies by, then ends with a borderline cliffhanger, leaving viewers ravenous for more. Since season two isn't even scheduled to come out this year, fans should be prepared for a long wait. That said, *The Walking Dead* is undeniably a show worth watching for anybody who loves horror, drama, and great television in general.

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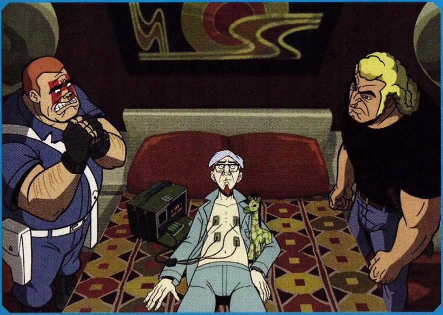
JASON D'APRILE



The Venture Bros.

Season 4

Still brilliantly stupid after all these years

Info

Price $39.99 **Creator** Christopher McCulloch **Starring** Christopher McCulloch **Rated** Not Rated **Extras** Commentary for all episodes; deleted scenes.

For a show that started off as a bawdy parody of *Jonny Quest*, *The Venture Bros.* has managed to evolve in insane ways. Still following the misadventures of Dr. Venture and his dysfunctional (and generally idiotic) family, it leaves no stone unturned when it comes to offending people. Yet the charm of the show is how dedicated it is to the absurd, while never forgetting that it's parodying '70s and '80s-style cartoon adventures.

It's this focus on nostalgic animated shows and sci-fi that really separates *Venture Bros.* from the endless slew of Fox and even other Adult Swim cartoons. While *Family Guy*, *The Simpsons*, and *American Dad* all strive to simultaneously mine laughs and offend, *Venture Bros.*'s distinct style still manages to set it apart.

The bright colors and animation style of an earlier era combine with a focus on sex and violence, over-the-top plots, and crazy characters to create something that is, for the appropriate viewer, completely entertaining. That said, while newcomers can jump right in, they'd be better served to begin watching from the first season as *Venture Bros.* has an overarching storyline that continues from episode to episode and season to season.

With secret agent bodyguard Brock's exit at the beginning of season four, Dr. Venture must rely on other muscle-bound help for protection and assistance, while trying to motivate one of his sons to follow in his scientist footsteps. There's also the return of the numbered henchman from last season, and a slew of oddball characters and situations to move the series along at a rocketing pace. However ridiculous the plot gets, it's consistently hilarious.

The season four Blu-ray has the entire 16-episode season on one disc and includes deleted scenes and commentary for each episode. It's an easy recommendation for the show's current fans and for newcomers who like dirty, crazy, and gleefully bizarre animated fare. JD

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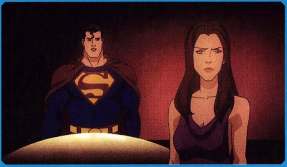
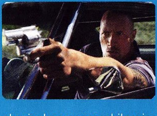
Blu-ray Roundup



All-Star Superman

Price $24.98 **Rated** PG-13

This is a surprisingly poignant and intelligent look at Superman as he prepares for his inevitable death after being poisoned by Lex Luthor. Although the script bogs down at times, this is still one of the best Superman stories we've seen in a long time. A solid pack of extras also helps make the movie a welcome addition to the DC Comics library. **8**



Faster

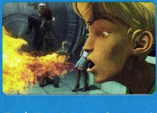
Price $34.95 **Rated** R

A surprisingly dark and smart revenge movie, *Faster* makes good use of Dwayne Johnson's physical presence while wisely not bogging him down with unnecessary dialogue. The supporting cast is excellent as well, with secondary characters exhibiting unexpected depth. **7**

Wild Target

Price $29.99 **Rated** PG-13

A fun British black comedy, *Wild Target* places Bill Nighy as an expert assassin who falters when hired to kill a beautiful, if amoral con artist (Emily Blunt). Couple in Rupert Everett and *Harry Potter's* Rupert Grint and the movie is a near classic, but falters when it becomes too slapstick. **7**



Firebreather

Price $28.99 **Rated** NR

Thanks to its excellent graphic novel source material and Peter Chung's (*Aeon Flux*) direction, the Cartoon Network's adaptation of *Firebreather* is amazingly good stuff. The action scenes are terrific and the CG looks great. **8**

Want that

Lust-have stuff for PlayStation people

Turtle Beach Earforce PX5

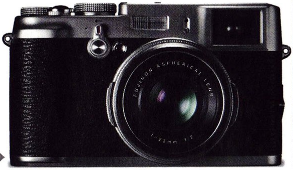
The Cadillac of gaming headphones, the PX5 offers voice morphing, customizable presets, Bluetooth pairing, and Dolby 5.1/7.1 surround sound.

$250
turtlebeach.com

Fujifilm FinePix X100

Come for the retro body, stay for the performance. This 12.3-megapixel shooter has a 23mm F2 lens and Fujifilm's stunningly crisp Hybrid Viewfinder.

$1,200
fujifilm.com



Travelteq Trip Sound

This rolling bag turns into a makeshift chair and sports an internal speaker that can connect to an audio player, phone, or even a PS3.

$1,050
travelteq.com

Squier Stratocaster Guitar/Controller

A controller and a guitar, this axe features real wood construction, real strings, and packs a punch when amped up or connected to a PS3.

$280
rockband.com

Sonomax Sculpted Eers

Custom-fitted to the shape of ears in just four minutes, the Sculpted Eers deliver dynamic sound in an ultra-comfortable form.

$200-$300
sonomax.com

Blue Microphones Yeti Pro

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PS3 PSP PlayStation.2
PlayStation The Official Magazine
Issue 043 March 2011
WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW
TOP SECRETS to dominate online
KILLZONE 3
The sharpest shooter on PS3 has arrived
HANDS-ON MOTORSTORM APOCALYPSE
SUPERHERO SHOWDOWN Which cape will rule your PS3?
MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3 reviewed!
UNCHARTED 3 TACTICS OGRE ELDER SCROLLS V JOURNEY

It's winter fun as Sev snowboards a Helghast. Who says intergalactic war can't be fun?

Wren
Don't hold your candy pail like that. It looks desperate.

Downloadable, From Stores?

I was surprised to read in the March 2011 issue (Issue #43) that GameStop is selling PSN downloadable content. To me, if it was released for the PSN, that's where it should stay. Look at GameStop's pricing practice for starters. The question we have to first ask is, will Sony monitor the charges for such content? And if so, why not start making them adhere to pricing standards for all items available?

I won't buy my downloadable content from GameStop and I ask others not to. Go online and buy what you need to. Because you never know how much you're going to end up paying.

NICK ENDERLE PARTS UNKNOWN

We have no problem with GameStop. And we have no problem with GameStop or any store selling downloadable content. Although we enjoy the convenience of buying online, making a purchase at a store allows us to use cash. People without credit cards deserve to play great downloadable titles such as Joe Danger, Plants vs. Zombies, Costume Quest, Flower, PixelJunk Shooter, *and a host of great game add-ons.*

Trophies, Anonymous

My name is John, and I am a recovering Trophy whore. I found some help when I reached my all-time low. I was on the street willing to do anything for a Trophy fix. I visited a non-profit organization called Trophy Whores Anonymous Terminal, or T.W.A.T. My sponsor really helped me overcome the power Trophy whorism had on me. Thank you for hearing my story and thank you Trophy Whores Anonymous Terminal. You certainly changed my life.

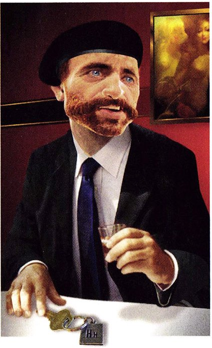
JOHN KEIFMAN PARTS UNKNOWN

The only cure for Trophy lust is more Trophies. And you deserve a Trophy for writing in. Ding!

Tactically Keen

I wanted to thank you guys not only for the great review of *Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together* (Issue #43) but also for mentioning Yasumi Matsuno's previous games. Each of them easily ranks among my favorite games ever and it always seems they never got the praise they deserved. *Vagrant Story* has to be one of the most underrated Square games ever. Now if only Yasumi Matsuno, Akihiko Yoshida, and Hitoshi

We welcome reader photos, letters, and stories ("Submissions"), however, we cannot promise to publish any Submission and none will be returned. Neither PlayStation: The Official Magazine ("PTOM") nor Future US, Inc. shall be liable for loss or damage to any Submission. By sending in your Submissions to PTOM you represent and warrant that you own or otherwise have all necessary rights to the Submissions to allow us to publish them in PTOM and as follows. You grant PTOM a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and fully sub-licensable license to use, copy, distribute, publish, modify, adapt, translate, and store, your Submissions, in any form, format, or medium, of any kind now known or later developed and to use your name, likeness, and any other information in connection with the use of the Submission you provide.



Sakimoto would grace the world with a new game.

PATRICK SMITH PARTS UNKNOWN

Tactical Error

In your review of *Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together*, you said the subtitles are nods to Queen songs, and that it was from *A Night at the Opera*. That's a mistake! That song, "Teo Torriatte (Let Us Cling Together)," was actually off their next album, *A Day at the Races*. But you're right about one thing: Freddie kills the Japanese language!

RICHARD LEE MANITOBA, CANADA

Care Button: Off

I just started reading the review of *Marvel vs. Capcom 3* (Issue #43), and I couldn't finish it without writing. Seriously, Scott? You "could care less" about X-23 as a character? I think you meant to write you "couldn't care less." Showing that you "could care less" means you do care, but there is room for less caring. Using "couldn't care less" would be showing you have the smallest amount of care possible. What's next? Using "your" as a contraction for "you are"? Come on, now. Your mother, in all of her syrupy goodness, would not be proud.

ADAM ANDERSON MCGAHEYSVILLE, VA

PTOM apologizes for the lapse in usage. And we wonder if young Scott could care less about his impromptu swim with the stinging, venomous Portuguese Men o' War.

In bed with *Call of Duty*!? That's utterly absurd. Sure, Captain Price is a charming and fascinating man and a bit of a rogue, perhaps... Come to think of it, we did wake up with a terrible headache... and he hasn't called.

Ask Ken

Q I often find myself reading your magazines at night. Sadly, horrible night terrors come to me after reading your magazine before going to bed. Is that normal? And do any of you have night terrors after you finish writing your sections?

MATTHEW BOHACIK PARTS UNKNOWN

A We only experience terror, dread, and paralyzing anxiety before finishing our work. We want to give our reader's the best each month and that is a lot of pressure. But after it's all done, Woo-hoo! We run around in our underwear! I recommend it.

Get a Room!

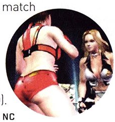
Are you guys in bed with the *Call of Duty* franchise or what? I'm mostly a single-player guy, but do play a lot of multiplayer, and the single-player campaign only lasts five hours! And come on, the online play is about 3–4 maps, and I'm really tired of playing against 12-year-olds who scream, play music in the background, etc.

REID VEITENHEIMER PARTS UNKNOWN

Have you tried a Bluetooth headset with a mute function?

Rumblings of Roses

Have you heard anything about a *Rumble Roses* sequel for PS3? *Rumble Roses* for PS2 shamelessly featured hot polygonal girl-on-girl wrestling action, was built on Yuke's *SmackDown* engine, and was developed by Konami. Clearly, the game wasn't for everyone, but foxy females and fisticuffs are still popular with today's videogame audiences. I see plenty of potential for the PS3 version: Polish the graphics, include some more customization, and definitely add more match options (maybe a "Wet T-shirt No-mercy" match on a platform suspended above a pit filled with Jell-O).



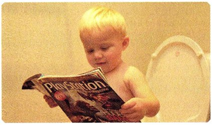
J. KENNEDY RALEIGH, NC

As a rule, Konami doesn't discuss projects until they're announced. And don't misconstrue: This doesn't mean there's a Rumble Roses game in development.

Also, Roses' two titles were more bizarre and amusing than they were fun to play. If the series ever returns, we'd like weirdness and wrestling in equal measure—and, honestly, not so much egregious titillation for the sake of egregious titillation. We have the Internet for that.

Oh, Baby

Thought you might enjoy this pic of my son looking through his favorite magazine while being potty trained.

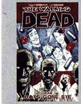


The controller doesn't fall far from the console, as they say.

JOHN LAURINSKI COPPELL, TX

Et Cetera

All the other stuff that distracts PTOM



The Walking Dead

"Pure coincidence: I started reading *The Walking Dead* a day before Telltale announced its game based on the series. Not a coincidence: This is the first Telltale game I'm looking forward to—the comics are riveting!"

GARY STEINMAN

Marshal Law Omnibus

"Marshal Law is a hero hunter, and he hasn't found one yet. Brutal and hilarious, the *Omnibus* reprints some of the greatest 'superhero' tales ever written. But be warned: This collection is not at all for children."

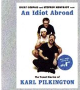
GREG ORLANDO

CHEAP GIRLS

Cheap Girls

"Don't worry, it's a band. And despite the potentially suggestive name, its mellow brand of mid-'90s pop punk is anything but offensive. Pick up *My Roaring 20's* if you're a sad dude with glasses."

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH



An Idiot Abroad

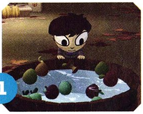
"Our favorite cackling sadist Ricky Gervais and his partner Stephen Merchant send their 'friend' Carl on an enlightenment quest of the Seven Wonders of the World. Carl holds fast to his 'typical Englander' views and foils spirituality at every turn. I cried laughing."

KEN BOUSQUET

PSN Best Games

It's the best of the best! Get the lowdown on this month's PSN goodies no one should live without.

BEST FULL GAMES



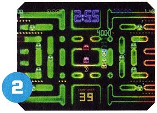
1

Tricks and Treats

Costume Quest

Sure, it's Halloween themed, but the adventure itself is timeless. With candy and monster-smiting in equal measure, this sugary delight is a charming homage to *Final Fantasy X-2*, enhanced by Tim Schafer's humor.

9 Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**



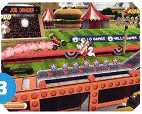
2

Retro Revival

Pac-Man Championship Ed.

There'll always be a place in our hearts for gaming's gluttonous yellow goober—but nostalgia be damned, this retro homage offers a whole new frenetic take on the classic gameplay.

9 Pub **Namco Bandai**
Dev **Namco Bandai**



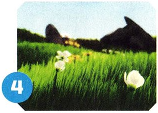
3

Platforming Puzzle Racer

Joe Danger

A mix of *ExciteBike*-style racing and insane stunt-driven platforming action, this vibrant indie gem shines brightly among the best PSN offerings available. Getting wild and dangerous has never been this awesome.

9 Pub **Hello Games**
Dev **Hello Games**



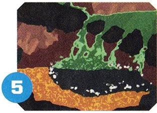
4

Zen Exploration

Flower

This gorgeous concept game makes blowing hordes of fluttering petals around a lush natural environment into an unforgettable experience that holds up against the biggest triple-A offerings. Don't pass this one up.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**



5

Puzzle Shooter

PixelJunk Shooter

The fourth entry in the *PixelJunk* series is easily the best. Saving trapped mining colonists with a versatile, environmental puzzle-solving ship is a creative and challenging affair taxing both the mind and reflexes.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

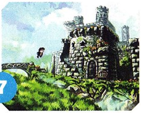
6

Lettuce Defend Ourselves

Plants vs. Zombies

This ubiquitous tower defense game has made the platform rounds, but there's no denying its insidious charms and eternal goofiness. Hours will be spent meticulously maintaining the grid-like lawn in an attempt to fend off the rampaging waves of groaning, brain-chomping zombies.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **PopCap Games**



7

Surreal Puzzler

Braid

Here's another instance where gaming melds with art. *Braid's* blend of captivating presentation, engrossing story, and mind-bending time-based puzzles makes for one of the most weird, wonderful platforming, puzzle-solving experiences available on PSN.

9 Pub **Hothead Games**
Dev **Number None**

8

Dolled-Up Adventure

Stacking

Double Fine games come chock full of personality and charm. Using babushka dolls to solve puzzles and explore a '30s Depression-era-esque world of miniature mannequins may not seem all that compelling, but it is. This is a fine argument for Double Fine to continue making PSN titles.

8 Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**

9

Cool New Old School

Scott Pilgrim vs. The World

Read Bryan Lee O'Malley's excellent *Scott Pilgrim* graphic novel series, see the film, and then battle for love in this retro-style brawler. It's not often we can recommend all three—this is a licensed game done right, and one that pays homage in grand fashion.

8 Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Ubisoft**

10

Tower of Power

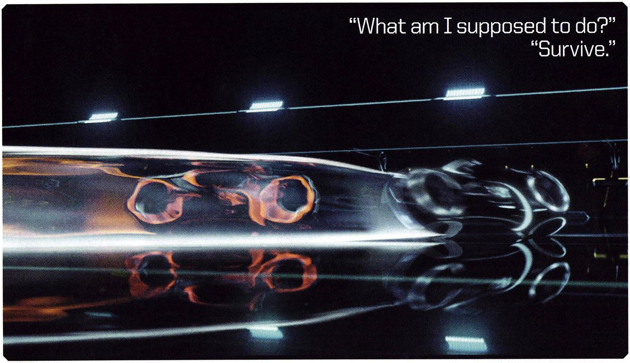
PixelJunk Monsters

What's one to do when monsters attack? How about earning funds and building offensive towers featuring varying attributes like speed, range, and power? Or, we could invite them in for diplomatic discussions and tea, but what fun is that?

8 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

What we're watching on our PS3 this month



Tron Legacy

ETA **April 5** Rated **PG** Genre **Sci-fi/Action** Studio **Walt Disney Pictures**

This sequel to the '80s classic follows Sam Flynn, the 27-year-old son of the first film's protagonist Kevin Flynn, as he looks into his father's disappearance. *Entertainment Weekly's* Owen Gleiberman astutely described the *TRON Legacy* universe as "*Blade Runner* after gentrification," and while there's more *Matrix*-inspired pseudo-philosophy than we'd like, the Daft Punk soundtrack and neon-infused eye candy still make this *Legacy*, and the nostalgia it summons up, worthwhile.

Top VDS Downloads

Movies

Due Date
Unstoppable
RED
Life As We Know It
Paranormal Activity 2

TV Shows

Smallville: Season 10
Supernatural: Season 6
Family Guy: Season 9
Young Justice: Season 1
The Walking Dead: Season 1

BEST FREE STUFF

1

Soundtrack

Acceleration of SUGURI X Edition

Nab the soundtrack for this over-the-top Japanese arena battle shooter. Containing 13 hypnotic dance tracks, this musical selection has some catchy electronic grooves.

Pub **Rockin' Android**
Dev **Orange_Juice**

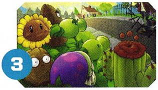
2

Extra Missions DLC

Hyperdimension Neptunia

This handful of free missions features psychotic androids and giant bulls. Completing each quest unlocks a new weapon to add to this oddball RPG's killing pleasure.

Pub **NIS America**
Dev **Compile Heart**



3

Wallpaper

Plants vs. Zombies

Every PS3 background should serve as a reminder of the adorable epic war between sunshine-loving flowers and brain-eating zombies. There are two stylish wallpaper designs available.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **PopCap Games**

4

Not for Self trailer

SOCOM 4 U.S. Navy SEALs

Culled from multiplayer footage, this teaser trailer does a great job of drumming up the bloodlust, with sniper takedowns and tactical strategy featuring heavily armed SEALs kicking ass.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Zipper Interactive**

5

Lovebug Mod/Swan Kart

ModNation Racers

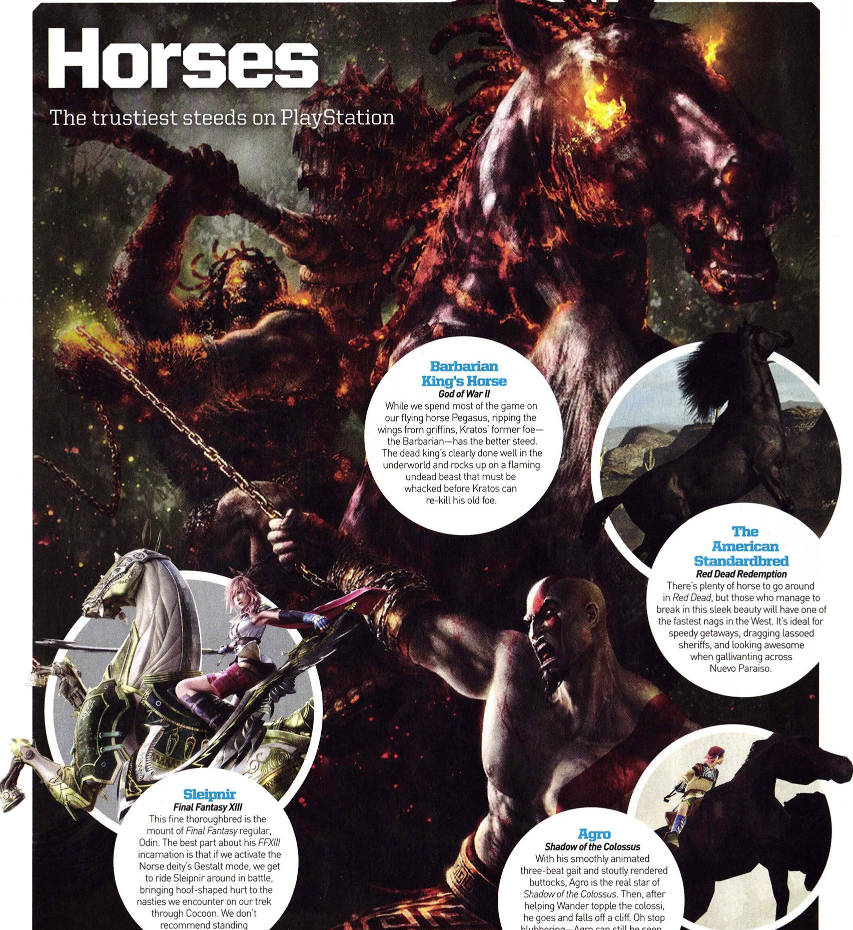
Valentine's Day may have come and gone, but that's no reason to stop spreading the love. This dashing little racer and buggy driver make a charming addition to this custom racing game's toolkit.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **United Front Games**

IN THE MOOD FOR...

Horses

The trustiest steeds on PlayStation



Barbarian King's Horse

God of War II

While we spend most of the game on our flying horse Pegasus, ripping the wings from griffins, Kratos' former foe—the Barbarian—has the better steed. The dead king's clearly done well in the underworld and rocks up on a flaming undead beast that must be whacked before Kratos can re-kill his old foe.

The American Standardbred

Red Dead Redemption

There's plenty of horse to go around in *Red Dead*, but those who manage to break in this sleek beauty will have one of the fastest nags in the West. It's ideal for speedy getaways, dragging lassoed sheriffs, and looking awesome when gallivanting across Nuevo Paraiso.

Sleipnir

Final Fantasy XIII

This fine thoroughbred is the mount of *Final Fantasy* regular, Odin. The best part about his *FFXIII* incarnation is that if we activate the Norse deity's Gestalt mode, we get to ride Sleipnir around in battle, bringing hoof-shaped hurt to the nasties we encounter on our trek through Cocoon. We don't recommend standing behind him.

Agro

Shadow of the Colossus

With his smoothly animated three-beat gait and stoutly rendered buttocks, Agro is the real star of *Shadow of the Colossus*. Then, after helping Wander topple the colossi, he goes and falls off a cliff. Oh stop blubbering—Agro can still be seen hobbling around during the game's finale. It's better that than the glue factory.

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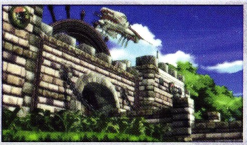
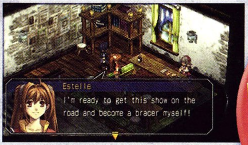
Stop Searching – The Largest, most Anticipated handheld adventure has arrived!

The Legend of Heroes
Trails in the Sky



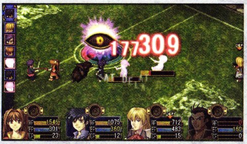
Join the legendary Bracer Guild and travel the world on an epic quest to defend justice within the kingdom.



Estelle

I'm ready to get this show on the road and become a bracer myself!

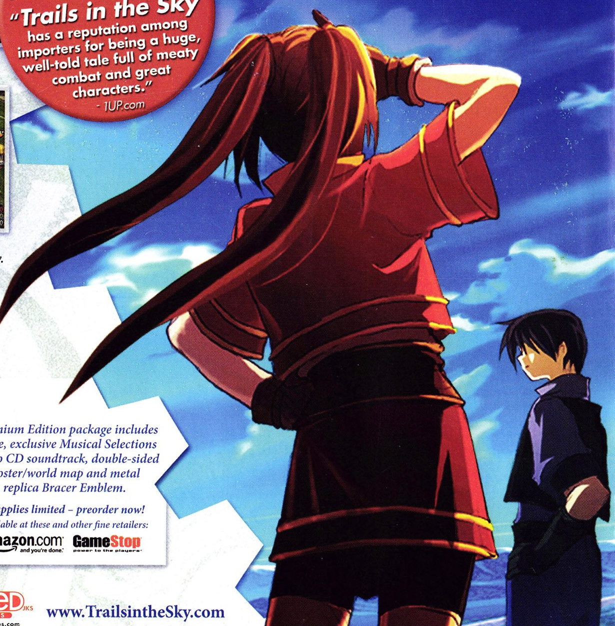
Enjoy over 50 hours of core gameplay, plus many optional sidequests.



Plan your strategies carefully, making the most of each character, weapon and ability.

Top 10
PSP® Games of 2011

"Trails in the Sky has a reputation among importers for being a huge, well-told tale full of meaty combat and great characters."
- 1UP.com



The Legend of Heroes
Trails in the Sky
PREMIUM EDITION

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TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Animated Blood
Drug Reference
Fantasy Violence
Language
Suggestive Themes
Use of Alcohol

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